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THE WORKS OF

GEORGE MEREDITH

ONE OF OUR CONQUERORS

I

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THE WORKS OF

GEORGE MEREDITH

VOLUME XIX

WESTMINSTER
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VOLUME

I

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ONE OF OUR CONQUERORS

CHAPTER I

Across London Bridge

A gentleman, noteworthy for a lively countenance and a waistcoat to match it, crossing London Bridge at noon on a gusty April day, was almost magically detached from his conflict with the gale by some sly strip of slipperiness, abounding in that conduit of the markets, which had more or less adroitly performed the trick upon preceding passengers, and now laid this one flat amid the shuffle of feet, peaceful for the moment as the uncomplaining who have gone to Sabrina beneath the tides. He was unhurt, quite sound, merely astonished, he remarked, in reply to the inquiries of the first kind helper at his elbow; and it appeared an acceptable statement of his condition. He laughed, shook his coat-tails, smoothed the back of his head rather thoughtfully, thankfully received his runaway hat, nodded bright beams to right and left, and making light of the muddy stigmas imprinted by the pavement, he scattered another shower of his nods and smiles around, to signify, that as his good friends would wish, he thoroughly felt his legs and could walk unaided. And he was in the act of doing it, questioning his familiar behind the waistcoat amazedly, to tell him how such a misadventure could have occurred to him of all men, when a glance

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below his chin discomposed his outward face. 'Oh, confound the fellow!' he said, with simple frankness, and was humorously ruffled, having seen absurd blots of smutty knuckles distributed over the maiden waistcoat.

His outcry was no more than the confidential communication of a genial spirit with that distinctive article of his attire. At the same time, for these friendly people about him to share the fun of the annoyance, he looked hastily brightly back, seeming with the contraction of his brows to frown on the little band of observant Samaritans; in the centre of whom a man who knew himself honourably unclean, perhaps consequently a bit of a political jewel, hearing one of their number confounded for his pains, and by the wearer of a superfine dashing-white waistcoat, was moved to take notice of the total deficiency of gratitude in this kind of gentleman's look and pocket. If we ask for nothing for helping gentlemen to stand upright on their legs, and get it, we expect civility into the bargain. Moreover, there are reasons in nature why we choose to give sign of a particular surliness when our wealthy superiors would have us think their condescending grins are cordials.

The gentleman's eyes were followed on a second hurried downward grimace, the necessitated wrinkles of which could be stretched by malevolence to a semblance of haughty disgust; reminding us, through our readings in journals, of the wicked overblown Prince Regent and his Court, together with the view taken of honest labour in the mind of supercilious luxury, even if indebted to it freshly for a trifle; and the hoar-headed nineteenth-century billow of democratic ire craved the word to be set swelling.

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'Am I the fellow you mean, sir?' the man said.

He was answered, not ungraciously: 'All right, my man.'

But the balance of our public equanimity is prone to violent antic bobbings on occasions when, for example, an ostentatious garment shall appear disdainful of our class and ourself, and coin of the realm has not usurped command of one of the scales: thus a fairly pleasant answer, cast in persuasive features, provoked the retort—

'There you 're wrong; nor wouldn't be.'

'What 's that?' was the gentleman's musical inquiry.

'That 's flat, as you was half a minute ago,' the man rejoined.

'Ah, well, don't be impudent,' the gentleman said, by way of amiable remonstrance before a parting.

'And none of your dam punctilio,' said the man.

Their exchange rattled smartly, without a direct hostility, and the gentleman stepped forward.

It was observed in the crowd, that after a few paces he put two fingers on the back of his head.

They might suppose him to be condoling with his recent mishap. But, in fact, a thing had occurred to vex him more than a descent upon the pavement or damage to his waistcoat's whiteness: he abominated the thought of an altercation with a member of the mob; he found that enormous beast comprehensible only when it applauded him; and besides he wished it warmly well; all that was good for it; plentiful dinners, country excursions, stout menagerie bars, music, a dance, and to bed: he was for patting, stroking, petting the mob, for tossing it sops, never for irritating it to show an eye-tooth, much less for causing it

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to exhibit the grinders: and in endeavouring to get at the grounds of his dissension with that dirty-fisted fellow, the recollection of the word *punctilio* shot a throb of pain to the spot where his mishap had rendered him susceptible. Headache threatened—and to him of all men! But was there ever such a word for drumming on a cranium? Puzzles are presented to us now and then in the course of our days; and the smaller they are the better for the purpose, it would seem; and they come in rattle-boxes, they are actually children's toys, for what they contain, but not the less do they buzz at our understandings and insist that they break or we, and, in either case, to show a mere foolish idle rattle in hollowness. Or does this happen to us only after a fall?

He tried a suspension of his mental efforts, and the word was like the clapper of a disorderly bell, striking through him, with reverberations, in the form of interrogations, as to how he, of all men living, could by any chance have got into a wrangle, in a thoroughfare, on London Bridge, of all places in the world!—he, so popular, renowned for his affability, his amiability; having no dislike to common dirty dogs, entirely the reverse, liking them and doing his best for them; and accustomed to receive their applause. And in what way had he offered a hint to bring on him the charge of punctilio?

But I am treating it seriously! he said, and jerked a dead laugh while fixing a button of his coat.

That he should have treated it seriously, furnished next the subject of cogitation; and here it was plainly suggested, that a degradation of his physical system, owing to the shock of the fall, must be seen and

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acknowledged; for it had become a perverted engine to pull him down among the puerilities, and very soon he was worrying at punctilio anew, attempting to read the riddle of the application of it to himself, angry that he had allowed it to be the final word, and admitting it a famous word for the closing of a controversy:—it banged the door and rolled drum-notes; it deafened reason. And was it a London cockney crow-word of the day, or a word that had stuck in the fellow's head from the perusal of his pot-house newspaper columns?

Furthermore, the plea of a fall, and the plea of a shock from a fall, required to account for the triviality of the mind, were humiliating to him who had never hitherto missed a step, or owned to the shortest of collapses. This confession of deficiency in explosive repartee—using a friend's term for the ready gift—was an old and a rueful one with Victor Radnor. His godmother Fortune denied him that. She bestowed it on his friend Fenellan, and little else. Simeon Fenellan could clap the halter on a coltish mob; he had positively caught the roar of cries and stilled it, by capping the cries in turn, until the people cheered him; and the effect of the scene upon Victor Radnor disposed him to rank the gift of repartee higher than a certain rosily oratorical that he was permitted to tell himself he possessed, in bottle if not on draught. Let it only be explosive repartee: the well-fused bomb, the bubble to the stone, echo round the horn. Fenellan would have discharged an extinguisher on *punctilio* in emission. Victor Radnor was unable to cope with it reflectively.

No, but one doesn't like being beaten by anything!

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he replied to an admonishment of his better mind, as he touched his two fingers, more significantly dubious than the whole hand, at the back of his head, and checked or stemmed the current of a fear. For he was utterly unlike himself; he was dwelling on a trifle, on a matter discernibly the smallest, an incident of the streets; and although he refused to feel a bump or any responsive notification of a bruise, he made a sacrifice of his native pride to his intellectual, in granting that he must have been shaken, so childishly did he continue thinking.

Yes, well, and if a tumble distorts our ideas of life, and an odd word engrosses our speculations, we *are* poor creatures, he addressed another friend, from whom he stood constitutionally in dissent, naming him Colney; and under pressure of the name, reviving old wrangles between them upon man's present achievements and his probable destinies: especially upon England's grandeur, vitality, stability, her intelligent appreciation of her place in the universe; not to speak of the historic dignity of London City. Colney had to be overcome afresh, and he fled, but managed, with two or three of his bitter phrases, to make a cuttle-fish fight of it, that oppressively shadowed his vanquisher:—

The Daniel Lambert of Cities: the Female Annuitant of Nations:—and such like, wretched stuff, proper to Colney Durance, easily dispersed and out-laughed when we have our vigour. We have as much as we need of it in summoning a contemptuous Pooh to our lips, with a shrug at venomous dyspepsia.

Nevertheless, a malignant sketch of Colney's, in the which Hengist and Horsa, our fishy Saxon

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originals, in modern garb of liveryman and gaitered squire, flat-headed, paunchy, assiduously servile, are shown blacking Ben-Israel's boots and grooming the princely stud of the Jew, had come so near to Victor Radnor's apprehensions of a possible, if not an impending, consummation, that the ghastly vision of the Jew Dominant in London City, over England, over Europe, America, the world (a picture drawn in literary sepia by Colney: with our poor hang-neck population uncertain about making a bell-rope of the forelock to the Satyr-snouty master; and the Norman Lord de Warenne handing him for a lump sum son and daughter, both to be Hebraized in their different ways), fastened on the most mercurial of patriotic men, and gave him a whole-length plunge into despondency.

It lasted nearly a minute. His recovery was not in this instance due to the calling on himself for the rescue of an ancient and glorious country; nor altogether to the spectacle of the shipping, over the parapet, to his right: the hundreds of masts rising out of the merchant river; London's unrivalled mezzotint and the City rhetorician's inexhaustible argument: he gained it rather from the imperious demand of an animated and thirsty frame for novel impressions. Commonly he was too hot with his business, and airy fancies above it, when crossing the bridge, to reflect in freshness on its wonders; though a phrase could spring him alive to them; a suggestion of the Foreigner, jealous, condemned to admire in despair of outstripping, like Satan worsted; or when a Premier's fine inflation magnified the scene at City banquets—exciting while audible, if a waggery in

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memory; or when England's cherished Bard, the Leading Article, blew bellows, and wind primed the lieges.

That a phrase on any other subject was of much the same effect, in relation to it, may be owned; he was lightly kindled. The scene, however, had a sharp sparkle of attractiveness at the instant. Down went the twirling horizontal pillars of a strong tide from the arches of the bridge, breaking to wild water at a remove; and a reddish Northern cheek of curdling pipeing East, at shrilly puffs between the Tower and the Custom House, encountered it to whip and ridge the flood against descending tug and long tail of stern-ajerk empty barges; with a steamer slowly nosing round off the wharf-cranes, preparing to swirl the screw; and half-bottom-upward boats dancing harpooner beside their whale; along an avenue, not fabulously golden, of the deputy masts of all nations, a wintry woodland, every rag aloft curling to volume; and here the spouts and the mounds of steam, and rolls of brown smoke there, variously undulated, curved to vanish; cold blue sky ashift with the whirl and dash of a very Tartar cavalry of cloud overhead.

Surely a scene pretending to sublimity?

Gazing along that grand highway of the voyaging forest, your London citizen of good estate has reproached his country's poets for not pouring out, succinctly and melodiously, his multitudinous larvæ of notions begotten by the scene. For there are times when he would pay to have them sung; and he feels them big; he thinks them human in their bulk; they are Londinensian; they want but form and fire

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to get them scored on the tablets of the quotable at festive boards. This he can promise to his poets. As for otherwhere than at the festive, Commerce invoked is a Goddess that will have the reek of those boards to fill her nostrils, and poet and alderman alike may be dedicate to the sublime, she leads them, after two sniffs of an idea concerning her, for the dive into the turtle-tureen. Heels up they go, poet first—a plummet he!

And besides it is barely possible for our rounded citizen, in the mood of meditation, to direct his gaze off the bridge along the waterway North-eastward without beholding as an eye the glow of whitebait's bow-window by the river-side, to the front of the summer sunset, a league or so down stream; where he sees, in memory savours, the Elysian end of Commerce: frontispiece of a tale to fetch us up the outwearied spectre of old Apicius; yea, and urge Crispinus to wheel his purse into the market for the purchase of a costlier mullet!

But is the Jew of the usury gold becoming our despot-king of Commerce?

In that case, we do not ask our country's poets to compose a single stanza of eulogy's rhymes—far from it. Far to the contrary, we bid ourselves remember the sons of whom we are; instead of revelling in the fruits of Commerce, we shoot scornfully past those blazing bellied windows of the aromatic dinners, and beyond Thames, away to the fishermen's deeps, Old England's native element, where the strenuous ancestry of a race yet and ever manful at the stress of trial are heard around and aloft whistling us back to the splendid strain of muscle, and spray fringes cloud,

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and strong heart rides the briny scoops and hillocks, and Death and Man are at grip for the haul.

There we find our nationality, our poetry, no Hebrew competing.

We do: or there at least we left it. Whether to recover it when wanted, is not so certain. Humpy Hengist and dumpy Horsa, quitting ledger and coronet, might recur to their sea bow-legs and red-stubble chins, might take to their tarpaulins again; they might renew their manhood on the capture of cod; headed by Harald and Hardiknut, they might roll surges to whelm a Dominant Jew clean gone to the fleshpots and effeminacy. Aldermen of our ancient conception, they may teach him that he has been backsliding once more, and must repent in ashes, as those who are for jewels, titles, essences, banquets, for wallowing in slimy spawn of lucre, have ever to do. They dispossess him of his greedy gettings.

And how of the Law?

But the Law is always, and must ever be, the Law of the stronger.

—Ay, but brain beats muscle, and what if the Jew should prove to have superior power of brain? A dreaded hypothesis! Why, then you see the insurgent Saxon seamen (of the names in two syllables with accent on the first), and their Danish captains, and it may be but a remnant of high-nosed Old Norman Lord de Warenne beside them, in the criminal box: and presently the Jew smoking a giant regalia cigar on a balcony giving view of a gallows-tree. But we will try that: on our side, to back a native pugnacity, is morality, humanity, fraternity—nature's rights, aha!

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and who withstands them? on his, a troop of mercenaries!

—And that lands me in Red Republicanism, a hop and a skip from Socialism! said Mr. Radnor, and chuckled ironically at the natural declivity he had come to. Still, there was an idea in it. . . .

A short run or attempt at running after the idea, ended in pain to his head near the spot where the haunting word punctilio caught at any excuse for clamouring.

Yet we cannot relinquish an idea that was ours; we are vowed to the pursuit of it. Mr. Radnor lighted on the tracks, by dint of a thought flung at his partner Mr. Inchling's dread of the Jews. Inchling dreaded Scotchmen as well, and Americans, and Armenians, and Greeks: latterly Germans hardly less; but his dread of absorption in Jewry, signifying subjection, had often precipitated a deplorable shrug, in which Victor Radnor now perceived the skirts of his idea, even to a fancy that something of the idea must have struck Inchling when he shrugged: the idea being . . . he had lost it again. Definition seemed to be an extirpating enemy of this idea, or she was by nature shy. She was very feminine; coming when she willed and flying when wanted. Not until nigh upon the close of his history did she return, full-statured and embraceable, to Victor Radnor.

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CHAPTER II

Through the Vague to the Infinitely Little

The fair dealing with readers demands of us, that a narrative shall not proceed at slower pace than legs of a man in motion; and we are still but little more than midway across London Bridge. But if a man's mind is to be taken as a part of him, the likening of it, at an introduction, to an army on the opening march of a great campaign, should plead excuses for tardy forward movements, in consideration of the large amount of matter you have to review before you can at all imagine yourselves to have made his acquaintance. This it is not necessary to do when you are set astride the enchanted horse of the Tale, which leaves the man's mind at home while he performs the deeds befitting him: he can indeed be rapid. Whether more active, is a question asking for your notions of the governing element in the composition of man, and of his present business here. The Tale inspirits one's earlier ardours, when we sped without baggage, when the Impossible was wings to imagination, and heroic sculpture the simplest act of the chisel. It does not advance, 'tis true; it drives the whirligig circle round and round the single existing central point; but it is enriched with applause of the boys and girls of both ages in this land; and all the English critics heap their honours on its brave old Simplicity:—our national literary flag, which signalizes us while we

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float, subsequently to flap above the shallows. One may sigh for it. An ill-fortuned minstrel who has by fateful direction been brought to see with distinctness, that man is not as much comprised in external features as the monkey, will be devoted to the task of the fuller portraiture.

After his ineffectual catching at the volatile idea, Mr. Radnor found repose in thoughts of his daughter and her dear mother. They had begged him to put on an overcoat this day of bitter wind, or a silken kerchief for the throat. Faithful to the Spring, it had been his habit since boyhood to show upon his person something of the hue of the vernal month, the white of the daisied meadow, and although he owned a light overcoat to dangle from shoulders at the Opera crush, he declined to wear it for protection. His gesture of shaking and expanding whenever the tender request was urged on him, signified a physical opposition to the control of garments. Mechanically now, while doating in fancy over the couple beseeching him, he loosened the button across his defaced waistcoat, exposed a large measure of chest to flaws of a wind barbed on Norwegian peaks by the brewers of cough and catarrh—horrid women of the whistling clouts, in the pay of our doctors. He braved them; he starved the profession. He was that man in fifty thousand who despises hostile elements and goes unpunished, calmly erect among a sneezing and tumbled host, as a lighthouse overhead of breezy fleets. The coursing of his blood was by comparison electrical; he had not the sensation of cold, other than that of an effort of the elements to arouse him; and so quick was he, through this fine animation, to

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feel, think, act, that the three successive tributaries of conduct appeared as an irreflective flash and a gamester's daring in the vein to men who had no deep knowledge of him and his lightning arithmetic for measuring, sounding, and deciding.

Naturally he was among the happiest of human creatures; he willed it so, with consent of circumstances; a boisterous consent, as when votes are reckoned for a favourite candidate: excepting on the part of a small band of black dissentients in a corner, a minute opaque body, devilish in their irreconcilability, who maintain their struggle to provoke discord, with a cry disclosing the one error of his youth, the sole bad step chargeable upon his antecedents. But do we listen to them? Shall we not have them turned out? He gives the sign for it; and he leaves his buoying constituents to outroar them: and he tells a friend that it was not, as one may say, an error, although an erratic step: but let us explain to our bosom friend; it was a step quite unregretted, gloried in; a step deliberately marked, to be done again, were the time renewed: it was a step necessitated (emphatically) by a false preceding step; and having youth to plead for it, in the first instance, youth and ignorance; and secondly, and O how deeply truly! Love. Deep true love, proved by years, is the advocate.

He tells himself at the same time, after lending ear to the advocate's exordium and a favourite sentence, that, judged by the Powers (to them only can he expose the whole skeleton-cupboard of the case), judged by those clear-sighted Powers, he is exonerated.

To be exonerated by those awful Powers, is to be approved.

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As to that, there is no doubt: whom they, all-seeing, discerning as they do, acquit they justify.

Whom they justify, they compliment.

They, seeing all the facts, are not unintelligent of distinctions, as the world is.

What, to them, is the spot of the error?—admitting it as an error. They know it for a thing of convention, not of Nature. We stand forth to plead it in proof of an adherence to Nature's laws: we affirm, that far from a defilement, it is an illumination and stamp of nobility. On the beloved who shares it with us, it is a stamp of the highest nobility. Our world has many ways for signifying its displeasure, but it cannot brand an angel.

This was another favourite sentence of Love's grand oration for the defence. So seductive was it to the Powers who sat in judgement on the case, that they all, when the sentence came, turned eyes upon the angel, and they smiled.

They do not smile on the condemnable.

She, then, were he rebuked, would have strength to uplift him. And who, calling her his own, could be placed in second rank among the blissful!

Mr. Radnor could rationally say that he was made for happiness; he flew to it, he breathed, dispensed it. How conceive the clear-sighted celestial Powers as opposing his claim to that estate? Not they. He knew, for he had them safe in the locked chamber of his breast, to yield him subservient responses. The world, or Puritanic members of it, had pushed him to the trial once or twice—or had put on an air of doing so; creating a temporary disturbance, ending in a merry duet with his daughter Nesta Victoria: a

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CHAPTER II Through the Vague to the Infinitely Little

glorious trio when her mother Natalia, sweet lily that she was, shook the rainwater from her cup and followed the good example to shine in the sun.

He had a secret for them.

Nesta's promising soprano, and her mother's contralto, and his baritone—a true baritone, not so well trained as their accurate notes—should be rising in spirited union with the curtain of that secret: there was matter for song and concert, triumph and gratulation in it. And during the whole passage of the bridge, he had not once cast thought on a secret so palpitating, the cause of the morning's expedition and a long year's prospect of the present day! It seemed to have been knocked clean out of it—*punctilioed* out, Fenellan might say. Nor had any combinations upon the theme of business displaced it. Just before the fall, the whole drama of the unfolding of that secret was brilliant to his eyes as a scene on a stage.

He refused to feel any sensible bruise on his head, with the admission that he perhaps might think he felt one: which was virtually no more than the feeling of a thought;—what his friend Dr. Peter Yatt would define as feeling a rotifer astir in the curative compartment of a homœopathic globule: and a playful fancy may do that or anything. Only, Sanity does not allow the infinitely little to disturb us.

Mr. Radnor had a quaint experience of the effects of the infinitely little while threading his way to a haberdasher's shop for new white waistcoats. Under the shadow of the representative statue of City Corporations and London's majesty, the figure of Royalty, worshipful in its marbled redundancy, fronting the

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bridge, on the slope where the seas of fish and fruit below throw up a thin line of their drift, he stood contemplating the not unamiable, reposefully-jolly Guelphic countenance, from the loose jowl to the bent knee, as if it were a novelty to him; unwilling to trust himself to the roadway he had often traversed, equally careful that his hesitation should not be seen. A trifle more impressible, he might have imagined the smoky figure and magnum of pursiness barring the City against him. He could have laughed aloud at the hypocrisy behind his quiet look of provincial wonderment at London's sculptor's art; and he was partly tickled as well by the singular fit of timidity enchaining him. Cart, omnibus, cab, van, barrow, donkey-tray, went by in strings, broken here and there, and he could not induce his legs to take advantage of the gaps; he listened to a warning that he would be down again if he tried it, among those wheels; and his nerves clutched him, like a troop of household women, to keep him from the hazard of an exposure to the horrid crunch, pitiless as tiger's teeth; and we may say truly, that once down, or once out of the rutted line, you are food for lion and jackal—the forces of the world will have you in their mandibles.

An idea was there too; but it would not accept pursuit.

'A pretty scud overhead?' said a voice at his ear.

'For fine!—to-day at least,' Mr. Radnor affably replied to a stranger; and gazing on the face of his friend Fenellan, knew the voice, and laughed: 'You?' He straightened his back immediately to cross the road, dismissing nervousness as a vapour, asking, between a cab and a van: 'Anything doing in the

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Through the Vague to the Infinitely Little

City?' For Mr. Fenellan's proper station faced Westward.

The reply was deferred until they had reached the pavement, when Mr. Fenellan said: 'I'll tell you,' and looked a dubious preface, to his friend's thinking.

But it was merely the mental inquiry following a glance at mud-spots on the coat.

'We'll lunch; lunch with me, I must eat, tell me then,' said Mr. Radnor, adding within himself: 'Emptiness! want of food!' to account for recent ejaculations and qualms. He had not eaten for a good four hours.

Fenellan's tone signified to his feverish sensibility of the moment, that the matter was personal; and the intimation of a touch on domestic affairs caused sinkings in his vacuity, much as though his heart were having a fall.

He mentioned the slip on the bridge, to explain his need to visit a haberdasher's shop, and pointed at the waistcoat.

Mr. Fenellan was compassionate over the 'Poor virgin of the smoky city!'

'They have their ready-made at these shops—last year's perhaps, never mind, do for the day,' said Mr. Radnor, impatient for eating, now that he had spoken of it. 'A basin of turtle; I can't wait. A brush of the coat; mud must be dry by this time. Clear turtle, I think, with a bottle of the Old Veuve. Not bad news to tell? You like that Old Veuve?'

'Too well to tell bad news of her,' said Mr. Fenellan in a manner to reassure his friend, as he intended. 'You wouldn't credit it for the Spring of the year, without the spotless waistcoat?'

'Something of that, I suppose.' And so saying,

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Mr. Radnor entered the shop of his quest, to be complimented by the shopkeeper, while the attendants climbed the ladder to upper stages for white waistcoat boxes, on his being the first bird of the season; which it pleased him to hear; for the smallest of our gratifications in life could give a happy tone to this brightly-constituted gentleman.

CHAPTER III

Old Veuve

They were known at the house of the turtle and the attractive Old Veuve: a champagne of a sobered sweetness, of a great year, a great age, counting up to the extremer maturity attained by wines of stilly depths; and their worthy comrade, despite the wanton sparkles, for the promoting of the state of reverential wonderment in rapture, which an ancient wine will lead to, well you wot. The silly girly sugary crudity has given way to womanly suavity, matronly composure, with yet the sparkles; they ascend; but hue and flavour tell of a soul that has come to a lodgement there. It conducts the youthful man to temples of dusky thought: philosophers partaking of it are drawn by the arms of garlanded nymphs about their necks into the fathomless of inquiries. It presents us with a sphere, for the pursuit of the thing we covet most. It bubbles over mellowness; it has, in the marriage with Time, extracted a spice of individuality from the saccharine: by miracle, one would say, were it not for our knowledge of the right noble issue of

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CHAPTER III
Old Venve

Time when he and good things unite. There should be somewhere legends of him and the wine-flask. There must be meanings to that effect in the Mythology, awaiting unravelment. For the subject opens to deeper than cellars, and is a tree with vast ramifications of the roots and the spreading growth, whereon half if not all the mythic Gods, Inferior and Superior, Infernal and Celestial, might be shown sitting in concord, performing in concert, harmoniously receiving sacrificial offerings of the black or the white; and the black not extinguishing the fairer fellow. Tell us of a certainty that Time has embraced the wine-flask, then may it be asserted (assuming the great year for the wine, *i.e.* combinations above) that a speck of the white within us who drink will conquer, to rise in main ascension over volumes of the black. It may, at a greater venture, but confidently, be said in plain speech, that the Bacchus of auspicious birth induces ever to the worship of the loftier Deities.

Think as you will; forbear to come hauling up examples of malarious men, in whom these pourings of the golden rays of life breed fogs; and be moved, since you are scarcely under an obligation to hunt the meaning, in tolerance of some dithyrambic inebriety of narration (quiverings of the reverent pen) when we find ourselves entering the circle of a most magnetic polarity. Take it for not worse than accompanying choric flourishes, in accord with Mr. Victor Radnor and Mr. Simeon Fenellan at their sipping of the venerable wine.

Seated in a cosy corner, near the grey City window edged with a sooty maze, they praised the wine, in the neuter and in the feminine; that for the glass,

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this for the widow-branded bottle: not as poets hymning; it was done in the City manner, briefly, part pensively, like men travelling to the utmost bourne of flying flavour (a dell in infinite æther), and still masters of themselves and at home.

Such a wine, in its capturing permeation of us, insists on being for a time a theme.

'I wonder!' said Mr. Radnor, completely restored, eyeing his half-emptied second glass and his boon-fellow.

'Low!' Mr. Fenellan shook head.

'Half a dozen dozen left?'

'Nearer the half of that. And who 's the culprit?'

'Old days! They won't let me have another dozen out of the house now.'

'They 'll never hit on such another discovery in their cellar, unless they unearth a fifth corner.'

'I don't blame them for making the price prohibitive. And sound as ever!'

Mr. Radnor watched the deliberate constant ascent of bubbles through their rose-topaz transparency. He drank. That notion of the dish of turtle was an inspiration of the right: he ought always to know it for the want of replenishment when such a man as he went quaking. His latest experiences of himself were incredible; but they passed, as the dimples of the stream. He finished his third glass. The bottle, like the cellar-wine, was at ebb: unlike the cellar-wine, it could be set flowing again. He prattled, in the happy ignorance of compulsion:

'Fenellan, remember, I had a sort of right to the wine—to the best I could get; and this Old Veuve, more than any other, is a bridal wine! We heard of Giulia Sanfredini's marriage to come off with the

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Spanish Duke, and drank it to the toast of our little Nesta's godmother. I've told you. We took the girl to the Opera, when quite a little one—that high:—and I declare to you, it was marvellous! Next morning after breakfast, she plants herself in the middle of the room, and strikes her attitude for song, and positively, almost with the Sanfredini's voice—illusion of it, you know,—trills us out more than I could have believed credible to be recollected—by a child. But I've told you the story. We called her Fredi from that day. I sent the diva, with excuses and compliments, a nuptial present—necklace, Roman goldwork, locket-pendant, containing sunny curl, and below a fine pearl; really pretty; telling her our grounds for the liberty. She replied, accepting the responsible office; touching letter—we found it so; framed in Fredi's room, under her godmother's photograph. Fredi has another heroine now, though she worships her old one still; she never abandons her old ones. You 've heard the story over and over!'

Mr. Fenellan nodded; he had a tenderness for the garrulity of Old Veuve, and for the damsel. Chatter on that subject ran pleasantly with their entertainment.

Mr. Radnor meanwhile scribbled, and despatched a strip of his Note-book, bearing a scrawl of orders, to his office. He was now fully himself, benevolent, combative, gay, alert for amusement or the probeing of schemes to the quick, weighing the good and the bad in them with his fine touch on proportion.

'City dead flat? A monotonous key; but it's about the same as fetching a breath after a run; only, true, it lasts too long—not healthy! Skepsey will

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bring me my letters. I was down in the country early this morning, looking over the house, with Taplow, my architect; and he speaks fairly well of the contractors. Yes, down at Lakelands, and saw my first lemon butterfly in a dell of sunshine, out of the wind, and had half a mind to catch it for Fredi,—and should have caught it myself, if I had! The truth is, we three are country born and bred; we pine in London. Good for a season; you know my old feeling. They are to learn the secret of Lakelands tomorrow. It's great fun; they think I don't see they've had their suspicion for some time. You said —somebody said—"the eye of a needle for what they let slip of their secrets, and the point of it for penetrating yours":—women. But no; my dear souls didn't prick and bother. And they dealt with a man in armour. I carry them down to Lakelands tomorrow, if the City's flat.'

'Keeping a secret's the lid on a boiling pot with you,' Mr. Fenellan said; and he mused on the profoundness of the flavour at his lips.

'I do it.'

'You do: up to bursting at the breast.'

'I keep it from Colney!'

'As Vesuvius keeps it from Palmieri when shaking him.'

'Has old Colney an idea of it?'

'He has been foretelling an eruption of an edifice.'

The laugh between them subsided to pensiveness.

Mr. Fenellan's delay in the delivery of his news was eloquent to reveal the one hateful topic; and this being seen, it waxed to such increase of size with the passing seconds, that prudence called for it.

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CHAPTER III
Old Vouve

'Come!' said Mr. Radnor.

The appeal was understood.

'Nothing very particular. I came into the City to look at a warehouse they want to mount double guard on. Your idea of the fireman's night-patrol and wires has done wonders for the office.'

'I guarantee the City if all my directions are followed.'

Mr. Fenellan's remark, that he had nothing very particular to tell, reduced it to the mere touch upon a vexatious matter, which one has to endure in the ears at times; but it may be postponed. So Mr. Radnor encouraged him to talk of an Insurance Office Investment. Where it is all bog and mist, as in the City to-day, the maxim is, not to take a step, they agreed. Whether it was attributable to an unconsumed glut of the markets, or apprehensions of a panic, had to be considered. Both gentlemen were angry with the Birds on the flags of foreign nations, which would not imitate a sawdust Lion to couch reposefully. Incessantly they scream and sharpen talons.

'They crack the City bubbles and bladders, at all events,' Mr. Fenellan said. 'But if we let our journals go on making use of them, in the shape of sham hawks overhead, we shall pay for their one good day of the game with our loss of the covey. An unstable London 's no world's market-place.'

'No, no; it 's a niggardly national purse, not the journals,' Mr. Radnor said. 'The journals are trading engines. Panics are grist to them; so are wars; but they do their duty in warning the taxpayer and rousing Parliament. Dr. Schlesien 's right: we go on believing that our God Neptune will do everything

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for us, and won't see that Steam has paralyzed his Trident:—good! You and Colney are hard on Schlesien—or at him, I should say. He's right: if we won't learn that we have become Continentals, we shall be marched over. Laziness, cowardice, he says.'

'Oh, be hanged!' interrupted Fenellan. 'As much of the former as you like. He's right about our "individualismus" being another name for selfishness, and showing the usual deficiency in external features; it's an individualism of all of a pattern, as when a mob cuts its lucky, each fellow his own way. Well, then, conscript them, and they'll be all of a better pattern. The only thing to do, and the cheapest. By heaven! it's the only honourable thing to do.'

Mr. Radnor disapproved. 'No conscription here.'

'Not till you've got the drop of poison in your blood, in the form of an army landed. That will teach you to catch at the drug.'

'No, Fenellan! Besides they've got to land. I guarantee a trusty army and navy under a contract, at two-thirds of the present cost. We'll start a National Defence Insurance Company after the next panic.'

'During,' said Mr. Fenellan, and there was a flutter of laughter at the unobtrusive hint for seizing Dame England in the mood.

Both dropped a sigh.

'But you must try and run down with us to Lakelands to-morrow,' Mr. Radnor resumed on a cheerfuller theme. 'You have not yet seen all I've done there. And it's a castle with a drawbridge: no exchangeing of visits, as we did at Craye Farm and at Creckholt;

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CHAPTER III Old Veuve

we are there for country air; we don't court neighbours at all—perhaps the elect; it will depend on Nataly's wishes. We can accommodate our Concert-set, and about thirty or forty more, for as long as they like. You see, that was my intention—to be independent of neighbouring society. Madame Callet guarantees dinners or hot suppers for eighty—and Armandine is the last person to be recklessly boasting.—When was it I was thinking last of Armandine?' He asked himself that, as he rubbed at the back of his head.

Mr. Fenellan was reading his friend's character by the light of his remarks and in opposition to them, after the critical fashion of intimates who know as well as hear: but it was amiably and trippingly, on the dance of the wine in his veins.

His look, however, was one that reminded; and Mr. Radnor cried: 'Now! whatever it is!'

'I had an interview:—I assure you,' Mr. Fenellan interposed to pacify: 'the smallest of trifles, and to be expected: I thought you ought to know it:—an interview with her lawyer; office business, increase of Insurance on one of her City warehouses.'

'Speak her name, speak the woman's name; we're talking like a pair of conspirators,' exclaimed Mr. Radnor.

'He informed me that Mrs. Burman has heard of the new mansion.'

'My place at Lakelands?'

Mr. Radnor's clear-water eyes hardened to stony as their vision ran along the consequences of her having heard it.

'Earlier this time!' he added, thrummed on the

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table, and thumped with knuckles. 'I make my stand at Lakelands for good! Nothing mortal moves me!'

'That butler of hers——'

'Jarniman, you mean: he's her butler, yes, the scoundrel—h'm—pah! Heaven forgive me! she's an honest woman at least; I wouldn't rob her of her little: fifty-nine or sixty next September, fifteenth of the month! with the constitution of a broken drug-bottle, poor soul! She hears everything from Jarniman: he catches wind of everything. All foreseen, Fenellan, foreseen. I have made my stand at Lakelands, and there's my flag till it's hauled down over Victor Radnor. London kills Nataly as well as Fredi—and me: that is—I can use the words to you—I get back to primal innocence in the country. We all three have the feeling. You're a man to understand. My beasts, and the wild flowers, hedge-banks, and stars. Fredi's poetess will tell you. Quiet waters reflecting. I should feel it in Paris as well, though they have nightingales in their Bois. It's the rustic I want to bathe me; and I had the feeling at school, biting at Horace. Well, this is my Sabine Farm, rather on a larger scale, for the sake of friends. Come, and pure air, water from the springs, walks and rides in lanes, high sand-lanes; Nataly loves them; Fredi worships the old roots of trees: she calls them the *faces* of those weedy sandy lanes. And the two dear souls on their own estate, Fenellan! And their poultry, cows, cream. And a certain influence one has in the country socially. I make my stand on a home—not empty punctilio.'

Mr. Fenellan repeated, in a pause, 'Punctilio,' and not emphatically.

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CHAPTER III Old Veuve

'Don't bawl the word,' said Mr. Radnor, at the drum of whose ears it rang and sang. 'Here in the City the woman's harmless; and here,' he struck his breast. 'But she can shoot and hit another through me. Ah, the witch!—poor wretch! poor soul! Only, she's malignant. I could swear! But Colney's right for once in something he says about oaths—"dropping empty buckets," or something.'

'"Empty buckets to haul up impotent demons, whom we have to pay as heavily as the ready devil himself,"' Mr. Fenellan supplied the phrase. 'Only, the moment old Colney moralizes, he's what the critics call sententious. We've all a parlous lot too much pulpit in us.'

'Come, Fenellan, I don't think . . .'

'Oh yes, but it's true of me too.'

'You reserve it for your enemies.'

'I'd like to distract it a bit from the biggest of 'em.' He pointed finger at the region of the heart.

'Here we have Skepsey,' said Mr. Radnor, observing the rapid approach of a lean small figure, that in about the time of a straight-aimed javelin's cast, shot from the doorway to the table.

CHAPTER IV

The Second Bottle

This little dart of a man came to a stop at a respectful distance from his master, having the look of an arrested needle in mechanism. His lean slip of face was an illumination of vivacious grey from the

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quickest of prominent large eyes. He placed his master's letters legibly on the table, and fell to his posture of attention, alert on stiff legs, the hands like sucking-cubs at play with one another.

Skepsey waited for Mr. Fenellan to notice him.

'How about the Schools for Boxing?' that gentleman said.

Deploring in motion the announcement he had to make, Skepsey replied: 'I have a difficulty in getting the plan treated seriously:—a person of no station:—it does not appear of national importance. Ladies are against. They decline their signatures; and ladies have great influence; because of the blood; which we know is very slight, rather healthy than not; and it could be proved for the advantage of the frailer sex. They seem to be unaware of their own interests—ladies. The contention all around us is with ignorance. My plan is written; I have shown it, and signatures of gentlemen, to many of our City notables—favourable in most cases: gentlemen of the Stock Exchange highly. The clergy and the medical profession are quite with me.'

'The surgical, perhaps you mean?'

'Also, sir. The clergy strongly.'

'On the grounds of—what, Skepsey?'

'Morality. I have fully explained to them:—after his work at the desk all day, the young City clerk wants refreshment. He needs it, must have it. I propose to catch him on his way to his music-halls and other places, and take him to one of our establishments. A short term of instruction, and he would find a pleasure in the gloves; it would delight him more than excesses—beer and tobacco. The female

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CHAPTER IV The Second Bottle

in her right place, certainly.' Skepsey supplicated honest interpretation of his hearer, and pursued: 'It would improve his physical strength, at the same time add to his sense of personal dignity.'

'Would you teach females as well—to divert them from their frivolities?'

'That would have to be thought over, sir. It would be better for them than using their nails.'

'I don't know, Skepsey: I'm rather a Conservative there.'

'Yes; with regard to the female, sir: I confess, my scheme does not include them. They dance; that is a healthy exercise. One has only to say, that it does not add to the national force, in case of emergency. I look to that. And I am particular in proposing an exercise independent of—I have to say—sex. Not that there is harm in sex. But we are for training. I hope my meaning is clear?'

'Quite. You would have boxing with the gloves to be a kind of monastic recreation.'

'Recreation is the word, sir; I have often admired it,' said Skepsey, blinking, unsure of the signification of monastic.

'I was a bit of a boxer once,' Mr. Fenellan said, conscious of height and breadth in measuring the wisp of a figure before him.

'Something might be done with you still, sir.'

Skepsey paid him the encomium after a respectful summary of his gifts in a glimpse. Mr. Fenellan bowed to him.

Mr. Radnor raised head from the notes he was pencilling upon letters perused.

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'Skepsey's craze: regeneration of the English race by boxing—nucleus of a national army?'

'To face an enemy at close quarters—it teaches that, sir. I have always been of opinion, that courage may be taught. I do not say heroism. And setting aside for a moment thoughts of an army, we create more valuable citizens. Protection to the weak in streets and by-places:—shocking examples of ruffians maltreating women, in view of a crowd.'

'One strong man is an overmatch for your mob,' said Mr. Fenellan.

Skepsey toned his assent to the diminishing thinness where a suspicion of the negative begins to wind upon a distant horn.

'Knowing his own intentions; and before an ignorant mob:—strong, you say, sir? I venture my word that a decent lad, with science, would beat him. It is a question of the study and practice of first principles.'

'If you were to see a rascal giant mishandling a woman?'

Skepsey conjured the scene by bending his head and peering abstractedly, as if over spectacles.

'I would beg him to abstain, for his own sake.'

Mr. Fenellan knew that the little fellow was not boasting.

'My brother Dartrey had a lesson or two from you in the first principles, I think?'

'Captain Dartrey is an athlete, sir: exceedingly quick and clever; a hard boxer to beat.'

'You will not call him captain when you see him; he has dismissed the army.'

'I much regret it, sir, much, that we have lost him.

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CHAPTER IV
The Second Bottle

Captain Dartrey Fenellan was a beautiful fencer. He gave me some instruction; unhappily, I have to acknowledge, too late. It is a beautiful art. Captain Dartrey says, the French excel at it. But it asks for a weapon, which nature has not given: whereas the fists . . .'

'So,' Mr. Radnor handed notes and papers to Skepsey: 'No sign of life?'

'It is not yet seen in the City, sir.'

'The first principles of commercial activity have retreated to earth's maziest penetralia, where no tides are!—is it not so, Skepsey?' said Mr. Fenellan, whose initiative and exuberance in loquency had been restrained by a slight oppression, known to guests; especially to the guest in the earlier process of his magnification and illumination by virtue of a grand old wine; and also when the news he has to communicate may be a stir to unpleasant heaps. The shining lips and eyes of his florid face now proclaimed speech, with his Puckish fancy jack-o'-lanterning over it. 'Business hangs to swing at every City door, like a rag-shop Doll, on the gallows of overproduction. Stocks and Shares are hollow nuts not a squirrel of the lot would stop to crack for sight of the milky kernel mouldered to beard. Percentage, like a cabman without a fare, has gone to sleep inside his vehicle. Dividend may just be seen by tiptoe stockholders, twinkling heels over the far horizon. Too true!—and our merchants, brokers, bankers, projectors of Companies, parade our City to remind us of the poor steamed fellows trooping out of the burst-boiler-room of the big ship Leviathan, in old years; a shade or two paler than the crowd o' the passengers,

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apparently alive and conversible, but corpses, all of them to lie their length in fifteen minutes.'

'And you, Fenellan?' cried his host, inspired for a second bottle by the lovely nonsense of a voluble friend wound up to the mark.

'Doctor of the ship! with this prescription!' Mr. Fenellan held up his glass.

'Empty?'

Mr. Fenellan made it completely so. 'Confident!' he affirmed.

An order was tossed to the waiter, and both gentlemen screwed their lips in relish of his heavy consent to score off another bottle from the narrow list.

'At the office in forty minutes,' Skepsey's master nodded to him and shot him forth, calling him back: 'By the way, in case a man named Jarniman should ask to see me, you turn him to the rightabout.'

Skepsey repeated: 'Jarniman!' and flew.

'A good servant,' Mr. Radnor said. 'Few of us think of our country so much, whatever may be said of the specific he offers. Colney has impressed him somehow immensely: he studies to write too; pushes to improve himself; altogether a worthy creature.'

The second bottle appeared. The waiter, in sincerity a reluctant executioner, heightened his part for the edification of the admiring couple.

'Take heart, Benjamin,' said Mr. Fenellan; 'it's only the bottle dies; and we are the angels above to receive the spirit.'

'I'm thinking of the house,' Benjamin replied. He told them that again.

'It's the loss of the fame of having the wine, that he mourns. But, Benjamin,' said Mr. Fenellan, 'the

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CHAPTER IV The Second Bottle

fame enters into the partakers of it, and we spread it, and perpetuate it for you.'

'That don't keep a house upright,' returned Benjamin.

Mr. Fenellan murmured to himself: 'True enough, it's elegy, though we perform it through a trumpet; and there's not a doubt of our being down or having knocked the world down, if we're loudly praised.'

Benjamin waited to hear approval sounded on the lips: uncertain as a woman is a wine of ticklish age. The gentlemen nodded, and he retired.

A second bottle, just as good as the first, should, one thoughtlessly supposes, procure us a similar reposeful and excursive enjoyment, as of men lying on their backs and flying imagination like a kite. The effect was quite other. Mr. Radnor drank hastily and spoke with heat: 'You told me all? tell me that!'

Mr. Fenellan gathered himself together; he sipped, and relaxed his bracing. But there really was a bit more to tell: not much, was it? Not likely to puff a gale on the voluptuous indolence of a man drawn along by Nereïds over sunny sea-waves to behold the birth of the Foam-Goddess? 'According to Carling, her lawyer; that is, he hints she meditates a blow.'

'Mrs. Burman means to strike a blow?'

'The lady.'

'Does he think I fear any—does he mean a blow with a weapon? Is it a legal . . .? At last? Fenellan!'

'So I fancied I understood.'

'But can the good woman dream of that as a blow to strike and hurt, for a punishment?—that's her one aim.'

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'She may have her hallucinations.'

'But a blow—what a word for it! But it 's life to us! life! It 's the blow we 've prayed for. Why, you know it! Let her strike, we bless her. We 've never had an ill feeling to the woman; utterly the contrary —pity, pity, pity! Let her do that, we 're at her feet, my Nataly and I. If you knew what my poor girl suffers! She 's a saint at the stake. Chiefly on behalf of her family. Fenellan, you may have a sort of guess at my fortune: I 'll own to luck; I put in a claim to courage and calculation. . . .'

'You 've been a bulwark to your friends.'

'All, Fenellan, all—stocks, shares, mines, companies, industries at home and abroad—all, at a sweep, to have the woman strike that blow! Cheerfully would I begin to build a fortune over again—singing! Ha! the woman has threatened it before. It 's probably feline play with us.'

His chin took support, he frowned.

'You may have touched her.'

'She won't be touched, and she won't be driven. What 's the secret of her? I can't guess, I never could. She 's a riddle.'

'Riddles with wigs and false teeth have to be taken and shaken for the ardently sought secret to reveal itself,' said Mr. Fenellan.

His picture, with the skeleton issue of any shaking, smote Mr. Radnor's eyes, they turned over. 'Oh!—her charms! She had a desperate belief in her beauty. The woman 's undoubtedly charitable; she 's not without a mind—sort of mind: well, it shows no crack till it 's put to use. Heart! yes, against me she has plenty of it. They say she used to be courted; she talked of

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The Second Bottle

it: "my courtiers, Mr. Victor!" There, heaven forgive me, I wouldn't mock at her to another.'

'It looks as if she were only inexorably human,' said Mr. Fenellan, crushing a delicious gulp of the wine, that foamed along the channel to flavour. 'We read of the tester of a bandit-bed; and it flattened unwary recumbents to paneakes. An escape from the like of that seems pleadable, should be: none but the drowsy would fail to jump out and run, or the insane.'

Mr. Radnor was taken with the illustration of his case. 'For the sake of my sanity, it was! to preserve my . . . but any word makes nonsense of it. Could —I must ask you—could any sane man—you were abroad in those days, horrible days! and never met her: I say, could you consent to be tied—I admit the vow, ceremony, so forth—tied to—I was barely twenty-one: I put it to you, Fenellan, was it in reason an engagement —which is, I take it, a mutual plight of faith, in good faith; that is, with capacity on both sides to keep the engagement: between the man you know I was in youth and a more than middle-aged woman crazy up to the edge of the cliff—as Colney says half the world is, and she positively is when her spite is roused. No, Fenellan, I have nothing on my conscience with regard to the woman. She had wealth: I left her not one penny the worse for—but she was not one to reckon it, I own. She could be generous, was, with her money. If she had struck this blow—I know she thought of it: or if she would strike it now, I could not only forgive her, I could beg forgiveness.'

A sight of that extremity fetched prickles to his forehead.

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'You 've borne your part bravely, my friend.'

'I!' Mr. Radnor shrugged at mention of his personal burdens. 'Praise my Nataly if you like! Made for one another, if ever two in this world! You know us both, and do you doubt it? The sin would have been for us two to meet and—but enough when I say, that I am she, she me, till death and beyond it: that 's my firm faith. Nataly teaches me the religion of life, and you may learn what that is when you fall in love with a woman. Eighteen—nineteen—twenty years!'

Tears fell from him, two drops. He blinked, bugled in his throat, eyed his watch, and smiled: 'The finishing glass! We should have had to put Colney to bed. Few men stand their wine. You and I are not lamed by it; we can drink and do business: my first experience in the City was, that the power to drink—keeping a sound head—conduces to the doing of business.'

'It 's a pleasant way of instructing men to submit to their conqueror.'

'If it doubles the energies, mind.'

'Not if it fiddles inside. I confess to that effect upon me. I've a waltz going on, like the snake with the tail in his mouth, eternal; and it won't allow of a thought upon Investments.'

'Consult me to-morrow,' said Mr. Radnor, somewhat pained for having inconsiderately misled the man he had hitherto helpfully guided. 'You've looked at the warehouse?'

'That 's performed.'

'Make a practice of getting over as much of your business in the early morning as you well can.'

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The Second Bottle

Mr. Radnor added hints of advice to a frail humanity: he was indulgent, the giant spoke in good fellowship. It would have been to have strained his meaning, for purposes of sarcasm upon him, if one had taken him to boast of a personal exemption from our common weakness.

He stopped, and laughed: 'Now I'm pumping *my* pulpit—eh? You come with us to Lakelands. I drive the ladies down to my office, ten A.M.: if it's fine; train half-past. We take a basket. By the way, I had no letter from Dartrey last mail.'

'He has buried his wife. It happens to some men.'

Mr. Radnor stood gazing. He asked for the name of the place of the burial. He heard without seizing it. A simulacrum spectre-spark of hopefulness shot up in his imagination, glowed and quivered, darkening at the utterance of the Dutch syllables, leaving a tinge of witless envy. Dartrey Fenellan had buried the wife whose behaviour vexed and dishonoured him: and it was in Africa! One would have to go to Africa to be free of the galling. But Dartrey had gone, and he was free!—The strange faint freaks of our sensations when struck to leap and throw off their load after a long affliction, play these disorderly pranks on the brain; and they are faint, but they come in numbers, they are recurring, always in ambush. We do not speak of them: we have not words to stamp the indefinite things; generally we should leave them unspoken if we had the words; we know them as out of reason: they haunt us, pluck at us, fret us, nevertheless.

Dartrey free, he was relieved of the murderous drama incessantly in the mind of shackled men.

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It seemed like one of the miracles of a divine intervention, that Dartrey should be free, suddenly free; and free while still a youngish man. He was in himself a wonderful fellow, the pick of his country for vigour, gallantry, trustiness, high-mindedness; his heavenly good fortune decked him as a prodigy.

'No harm to the head from that fall of yours?' Mr. Fenellan said.

'None.' Mr. Radnor withdrew his hand from head to hat, clapped it on and cried cheerily: 'Now to business'; as men may, who have confidence in their ability to concentrate an instant attention upon the substantial. 'You dine with us. The usual Quartet: Peridon, Pempton, Colney, Yatt, or Catkin: Priscilla Graves and Nataly: the Rev. Septimus; Cormyn and his wife: Young Dudley Sowerby and I—flutes: he has precision, as naughty Fredi said, when some one spoke of expression. In the course of the evening, Lady Grace, perhaps: you like her.'

'Human nature in the upper circle is particularly likeable.'

'Fenellan,' said Mr. Radnor, emboldened to judge hopefully of his fortunes by mere pressure of the thought of Dartrey's, 'I put it to you: would you say, that there is anything this time behind your friend Carling's report?'

Although it had not been phrased as a report, Mr. Fenellan's answering look and gesture, and a run of indiscriminate words, enrolled it in that form, greatly to the inspiriting of Mr. Radnor.

Old Veuve in one, to the soul of Old Veuve in the other, they recalled a past day or two, touched the skies; and merriment or happiness in the times

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CHAPTER IV
The Second Bottle

behind them held a mirror to the present: or the hour of the reverse of happiness worked the same effect by contrast: so that notions of the singular election of us by Dame Fortune, sprang like vinous bubbles. For it is written, that however powerful you be, you shall not take the Winegod on board to entertain him as a simple passenger; and you may captain your vessel, you may pilot it, and keep to your reckonings, and steer for all the ports you have a mind to, even to doing profitable exchange with Armenian and Jew, and still you shall do the something more, which proves that the Winegod is on board: he is the pilot of your blood if not the captain of your thoughts.

Mr. Fenellan was unused to the copious outpouring of Victor Radnor's confidences upon his domestic affairs; and the unwonted excitement of Victor's manner of speech would have perplexed him, had there not been such a fiddling of the waltz inside him.

Payment for the turtle and the bottles of Old Veuve was performed apart with Benjamin, while Simeon Fenellan strolled out of the house, questioning a tumbled mind as to what description of suitable entertainment, which would be dancing and flirting and fal-lallery in the season of youth, London City could provide near meridian hours for a man of middle age carrying his bottle of champagne, like a guest of an old-fashioned wedding-breakfast. For although he could stand his wine as well as his friend, his friend's potent capacity martially after the feast to buckle to business at a sign of the clock, was beyond him. It pointed to one of the embodied elements, hot from Nature's workshop. It told of the endurance of powers, that partly explained the successful, astonish-

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ing career of his friend among a people making urgent, if unequal, demands perpetually upon stomach and head.

CHAPTER V

The London Walk Westward

In that nationally interesting Poem, or Dramatic Satire, once famous, THE RAJAH IN LONDON (London, Limbo and Sons, 1889), now obliterated under the long wash of Press-matter, the reflection—not unknown to philosophical observers, and natural perhaps in the mind of an Oriental Prince—produced by his observation of the march of London citizens Eastward at morn, Westward at eve, attributes their practice to a survival of the Zoroastrian form of worship. His Minister, favourable to the people or for the sake of fostering an idea in his Master's head, remarks, that they show more than the fidelity of the sunflower to her God. The Rajah, it would appear, frowns interrogatively, in the princely fashion, accusing him of obscureness of speech:—princes and the louder members of the grey public are fraternally instant to spurn at the whip of that which they do not immediately comprehend. It is explained by the Minister: not even the flower, he says, would hold constant, as they, to the constantly unseen—a trebly cataphractic Invisible. The Rajah professes curiosity to know how it is that the singular people nourish their loyalty, since they cannot attest to the continued being of the object in which they put their faith. He is informed by his prostrate servant of a

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CHAPTER V
The London Walk Westward

settled habit they have of diligently seeking their Divinity, hidden above, below; and of copiously taking inside them doses of what is denied to their external vision: thus they fortify credence chemically on an abundance of meats and liquors; fire they eat, and they drink fire; they become consequently instinct with fire. Necessarily therefore they believe in fire. Believing, they worship. Worshipping, they march Eastward at morn, Westward at eve. For that way lies the key, this way the cupboard, of the supplies, their fuel.

According to Stage directions, THE RAJAH AND HIS MINISTER *Enter a Gin-Palace.* It is to witness a service that they have learnt to appreciate as Anglicanly religious.

On the step of the return to their Indian clime, they speak of the hatted sect, which is most, or most commercially, succoured and fattened by our rule there: they wave adieu to the conquering Islanders, as to 'Parsees beneath a cloud.'

The two are seen last on the deck of the vessel, in perusal of a medical pamphlet composed of statistics and sketches, traceries, horrid blots, diagrams with numbers referring to notes, of the various maladies caused by the prolonged prosecution of that form of worship.

'But can they suffer so and live?' exclaims the Rajah, vexed by the physical sympathetic twinges which set him wincing.

'Science,' his Minister answers, 'took them up where Nature, in pity of their martyrdom, dropped them. They do not live; they are engines, insensible things of repairs and patches; insteamed to pursue

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their infuriate course, to the one end of exhausting supplies for the renewing of them, on peril of an instant suspension if they deviate a step or stop: nor do they.'

The Rajah is of opinion, that he sails home with the key of the riddle of their power to vanquish. In some apparent allusion to an Indian story of a married couple who successfully made their way, he accounts for their solid and resistless advance, resembling that of—

> The doubly-wedded man and wife,
> Pledged to each other and against the world
> With mutual onion.

One would like to think of the lengthened tide-flux of pedestrian citizens facing South-westward, as being drawn by devout attraction to our nourishing luminary: at the hour, mark, when the Norland cloud-king, after a day of wild invasion, sits him on his restful bank of blueish smack-o'-cheek red above Whitechapel, to spy where his last puff of icy javelins pierces and dismembers the vapoury masses in cluster about the circle of flame descending upon the greatest and most elevated of Admirals at the head of the Strand, with illumination of smoke-plumed chimneys, house-roofs, window-panes, weather-vanes, monument and pedimental monsters, and omnibus-umbrella. One would fain believe that they advance admireing; they are assuredly made handsome by the beams. No longer mere concurrent atoms of the furnace of business (from coal-dust to sparks, rushing, as it were, on respiratory blasts of an enormous engine's centripetal and centrifugal energy), their step is

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CHAPTER V
The London Walk Westward

leisurely to meet the rosy Dinner, which is ever at see-saw with the God of Light in his fall; the mask of the noble human visage upon them is not roughened, as at mid-day, by those knotted hard ridges of the scrambler's hand seen from forehead down to jaw; when indeed they have all the appearance of sour scientific productions. And unhappily for the national portrait, in the Poem quoted, the Rajah's Minister chose an hour between morning and meridian, or at least before an astonished luncheon had come to composure inside their persons, for drawing his Master's attention to the quaint similarity of feature in the units of the busy antish congregates they had travelled so far to visit and to study:

> These Britons wear
> The driven and perplexèd look of men
> Begotten hastily 'twixt business hours.

It could not have been late afternoon.

These Orientals should have seen them, with Victor Radnor among them, fronting the smoky splendours of the sunset. In April, the month of piled and hurried cloud, it is a Rape of the Sabines overhead from all quarters, either one of the winds brawnily larcenous; and London, smoking royally to the open skies, builds images of a dusty epic fray for possession of the portly dames. There is immensity, swinging motion, collision, dusky richness of colouring, to the sight; and to the mind idea. London presents it. If we can allow ourselves a moment for not inquireing scrupulously (you will do it by inhaling the aroma of the ripe kitchen hour), here is a noble harmony of heaven and the earth of the works

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of man, speaking a grander tongue than barren sea or wood or wilderness. Just a moment; it goes; as, when a well-attuned barrel-organ in a street has drawn us to recollections of the Opera or Italy, another harshly crashes, and the postman knocks at doors, and perchance a costermonger cries his mash of fruit, a beggarwoman wails her hymn. For the pinched are here, the dinnerless, the weedy, the gutter-growths, the forces repressing them. That grand tongue of the giant City inspires none human to Bardic eulogy while we let those discords be. An embittered Muse of Reason prompts her victims to the composition of the adulatory Essay and of the Leading Article, that she may satiate an angry irony upon those who pay fee for their filling with the stuff. *Song* of praise she does not permit. A moment of satisfaction in a striking picture is accorded, and no more. For this London, this England, Europe, world, but especially this London, is rather a thing for hospital operations than for poetic rhapsody; in aspect, too, streaked scarlet and pock-pitted under the most cumbrous of jewelled tiaras; a Titanic work of long-tolerated pygmies; of whom the leaders, until sorely discomforted in body and doubtful in soul, will give gold and labour, will impose restrictions upon activity, to maintain a conservatism of diseases. Mind is absent, or somewhere so low down beneath material accumulations that it is inexpressive, powerless to drive the ponderous bulk to such excisings, purgeings, purifyings as might—as may, we will suppose, render it acceptable, for a theme of panegyric, to the Muse of Reason; ultimately, with her consent, to the Spirit of Song.

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CHAPTER V
The London Walk Westward

But first there must be the cleansing. When Night has fallen upon London, the Rajah remarks:

Monogamic Societies present
A decent visage and a hideous rear.

His Minister (satirically, or in sympathetic Conservatism) would have them not to move on, that they may preserve among beholders the impression of their handsome frontage. Night, however, will come; and they, adoreing the decent face, are moved on, made to expose what the Rajah sees. Behind his courteousness, he is an antagonistic observer of his conquerors; he pushes his questions farther than the need for them; his Minister the same; apparently to retain the discountenanced people in their state of exposure. Up to the time of the explanation of the puzzle on board the departing vessel (on the road to Windsor, at the Premier's reception, in the cell of the Police, in the presence of the Magistrate—whose crack of a totally inverse decision upon their case, when he becomes acquainted with the titles and station of these imputedly peccant, refreshes them), they hold debates over the mysterious contrarieties of a people professing in one street what they confound in the next, and practising by day a demureness that yells with the cat of the tiles at night.

Granting all that, it being a transient novelist's business to please the light-winged hosts which live for the hour, and give him his only chance of half of it, let him identify himself with them, in keeping to the quadrille on the surface and shirking the disagreeable.

Clouds of high colour above London City are as

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the light of the Goddess to lift the angry heroic head over human. They gloriously transfigure. A Murillo beggar is not more precious than sight of London in any of the streets admitting coloured cloud-scenes; the cunning of the sun's hand so speaks to us. And if haply down an alley some olive mechanic of street-organs has quickened little children's legs to rhythmic footing, they strike on thoughts braver than pastoral. Victor Radnor, lover of the country though he was, would have been the first to say it. He would indeed have said it too emphatically. Open London as a theme, to a citizen of London ardent for the clear air out of it, you have roused an orator; you have certainly fired a magazine, and must listen to his reminiscences of one of its paragraphs or pages.

The figures of the hurtled fair ones in sky were wreathing Nelson's cocked hat when Victor, distinguishably bright-faced amid a crowd of the irradiated, emerged from the tideway to cross the square, having thoughts upon Art, which were due rather to the suggestive proximity of the National Gallery than to the Flemish mouldings of cloud-forms under Venetian brushes. His purchases of pictures had been his unhappiest ventures. He had relied and reposed on the dicta of newspaper critics; who are sometimes unanimous, and are then taken for guides, and are fatal. He was led to the conclusion that our modern-lauded pictures do not ripen. They have a chance of it, if abused. But who thinks of buying the abused? Exalted by the critics, they have, during the days of Exhibition, a glow, a significance or a fun, abandoning them where examination is close and constant, and the critic's trumpet-note dispersed to the thinness of

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CHAPTER V The London Walk Westward

the fee for his blowing. As to foreign pictures, classic pictures, Victor had known his purse to leap for a Raphael with a history in stages of descent from the Master, and critics to swarm: a Raphael of the dealers, exposed to be condemned by the critics, universally derided. A real Raphael in your house is aristocracy to the roof-tree. But the wealthy trader will reach to title before he may hope to get the real Raphael or a Titian. Yet he is the one who would, it may be, after enjoyment of his prize, bequeath it to the nation:—PRESENTED TO THE NATION BY VICTOR MONTGOMERY RADNOR. There stood the letters in gilt; and he had a thrill of his generosity; for few were the generous acts he could not perform; and if an object haunted the deed, it came of his trader's habit of mind.

He revelled in benevolent projects of gifts to the nation, which would coat a sensitive name. Say, an ornamental City Square, flowers, fountains, afternoon bands of music: comfortable seats in it, and a shelter, and a ready supply of good cheap coffee or tea. Tobacco? why not rolls of honest tobacco! nothing so much soothes the labourer. A volume of plans for the benefit of London smoked out of each ascending pile in his brain. London is at night a moaning outcast round the policeman's legs. What of an all-night-long, cosy, brightly-lighted, odoriferous coffee-saloon for rich or poor, on the model of the hospitable Paduan? Owner of a penny, no soul among us shall be rightly an outcast. . . .

Dreams of this kind are taken at times by wealthy people as a cordial at the bar of benevolent intentions. But Victor was not the man to steal his refreshments in that known style. He meant to make deeds of

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them, as far as he could, considering their immense extension; and except for the sensitive social name, he was of single-minded purpose.

Turning to the steps of a chemist's shop to get a prescription made up for his Nataly's doctoring of her domestics, he was arrested by a rap on his elbow; and no one was near; and there could not be a doubt of the blow—a sharp hard stroke, sparing the funny-bone, but ringing. His head, at the *punctilio* bump, throbbed responsively: owing to which or indifference to the prescription, as of no instant requirement, he pursued his course, resembling mentally the wanderer along a misty beach, who hears cannon across the waters.

He certainly had felt it. He remembered the shock: he could not remember much of pain. How about intimations? His asking caused a smile.

Very soon the riddle answered itself. He had come into view of the diminutive marble cavalier of the infantile cerebellum; recollecting a couplet from the pen of the disrespectful Satirist Peter, he thought of a fall: his head and his elbow responded simultaneously to the thought.

All was explained save his consequent rightabout from the chemist's shop: and that belongs to the minor involutions of circumstances and the will. It passed like a river's wrinkle. He read the placards of the Opera, reminding himself of the day when it was the single Opera-house; and now we have two —or three. We have also a distracting couple of Clowns and Pantaloons in our Pantomimes; though Colney says that the multiplication of the pantaloon is a distinct advance to representative truth—and bother Colney! Two Columbines also. We forbear

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CHAPTER V
The London Walk Westward

to speak of men, but where is the boy who can set his young heart upon two Columbines at once! Victor felt the boy within him cold to both; and in his youth he had doated on the solitary twirling spangled lovely Fairy. The tale of a delicate lady dancer leaping as the kernel out of a nut from the arms of Harlequin to the legalized embrace of a wealthy brewer, and thenceforth living, by repute, with unagitated legs, as holy a matron, despite her starry past, as any to be shown in a country breeding the like abundantly, had always delighted him. It seemed a reconcilement of opposing stations, a defeat of Puritanism. Ay, and poor women!—women in the worser plight under the Puritan's eye. They may be erring and good: yes, finding the man to lift them the one step up! Read the history of the error. But presently we shall teach the Puritan to act by the standards of his religion. All is coming right—must come right. Colney shall be confounded.

Hereupon Victor hopped on to Fenellan's hint regarding the designs of 'Mrs. Burman.'

His Nataly might have to go through a short sharp term of scorching—Godiva to the gossips.

She would come out of it glorified. She would be reconciled with her family. With her story of her devotion to the man loving her, the world would know her for the heroine she was: a born lady, in appearance and manner an empress among women. It was a story to be pleaded in any court, before the sternest public. Mrs. Burman had thrown her into temptation's way. It was a story to touch the heart, as none other ever written. Not over all the earth was there a woman equalling his Nataly!

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And their Nesta would have a dowry to make princesses envious:—she would inherit . . . he ran up an arithmetical column, down to a line of figures in addition, during three paces of his feet. Dartrey Fenellan had said of little Nesta once, that she had a nature pure and sparkling as mid-sea foam. Happy he who wins her! But she was one of the young women who are easily pleased and hardly enthralled. Her father strained his mind for the shape of the man to accomplish the feat. Whether she had an ideal of a youth in her feminine head, was beyond his guessing. She was not the damsel to weave a fairy waistcoat for the identical prince, and try it upon all comers to discover him: as is done by some; excuseably, if we would be just. Nesta was of the elect, for whom excuses have not to be made. She would probably like a flute-player best; because her father played the flute, and she loved him—laughably a little maiden's reason! Her father laughed at her.

Along the street of Clubs, where a bruised fancy may see black balls raining, the narrow way between ducal mansions offers prospect of the sweep of greensward, all but touching up to the sunset to draw it to the dance.

Formerly, in his very early youth, he clasped a dream of gaining way to an alliance with one of these great surrounding houses; and he had a passion for the acquisition of money as a means. And it has to be confessed, he had sacrificed in youth a slice of his youth, to gain it without labour—usually a costly purchase. It had ended disastrously: or say, a running of the engine off the rails, and a speedy re-establishment of traffic. Could it be a loss, that had led to the

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CHAPTER V
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winning of his Nataly? Can we really loathe the first of the steps when the one in due sequence, cousin to it, is a blessedness? If we have been righted to health by a medical draught, we are bound to be respectful to our drug. And so we are, in spite of Nature's wry face and shiver at a mention of what we went through during those days, those horrible days: —hide them!

The smothering of them from sight set them sounding: he had to listen. Colney Durance accused him of entering into bonds with somebody's grandmother for the simple sake of browsing on her thousands: a picture of himself too abhorrent to Victor to permit of any sort of acceptance. Consequently he struck away to the other extreme of those who have a choice in mixed motives: he protested that compassion had been the cause of it. Looking at the circumstance now, he could see, allowing for human frailty—perhaps a wish to join the ranks of the wealthy—compassion for the woman as the principal motive. How often had she not in those old days praised his generosity for allying his golden youth to her withered age—Mrs. Burman's very words! And she was a generous woman—or had been: she was generous in saying that. Well, and she was generous in having a well-born well-bred beautiful young creature like Nataly for her companion, when it was a case of need for the dear girl; and compassionately insisting, against remonstrances:—they were spoken by him, though they were but partial. How, then, had she become—at least, how was it that she could continue to behave as the vindictive Fury who persecuted remorselessly, would give no peace, poisoned the wells round

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every place where he and his dear one pitched their tent!

But at last she had come to charity, as he could well believe. Not too late! Victor's feeling of gratitude to Mrs. Burman assured him it was genuine because of his genuine conviction, that she had determined to end her incomprehensibly lengthened days in reconcilement with him: and he had always been ready to 'forget and forgive.' A truly beautiful old phrase! It thrilled one of the most susceptible of men.

His well-kept secret of the spacious country-house danced him behind a sober demeanour from one park to another; and along beside the drive to view of his town-house—unbeloved of the inhabitants, although by acknowledgement it had, as Fredi funnily drawled, to express her sense of justice in depreciation, 'good accommodation.' Nataly was at home, he was sure. Time to be dressing: sun sets at six-forty, he said, and glanced at the stained West, with an accompanying vision of outspread primroses flooding banks of shadowy fields near Lakelands.

He crossed the road and rang.

Upon the opening of the door, there was a cascade of muslin downstairs. His darling Fredi stood out of it, a dramatic Undine.

CHAPTER VI

Nataly

'Il segreto!' the girl cried commandingly, with a forefinger at his breast.

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CHAPTER VI Nataly

He crossed arms, toning in similar recitative, with anguish, 'Dove volare!'

They joined in half a dozen bars of operatic duet.

She flew to him, embraced and kissed.

'I must have it, my papa! unlock. I've been spying the bird on its hedgerow nest so long! And this morning, my own dear cunning papa, weren't you as bare as winter twigs? "To-morrow perhaps we will have a day in the country." To go and see the nest? Only, please, not a big one. A real nest; where mama and I can wear dairymaid's hat and apron all day—the style you like; and strike roots. We've been torn away two or three times: twice, I know.'

'Fixed, this time; nothing shall tear us up,' said her father, moving on to the stairs, with an arm about her.

'So, it is . . .?'

'She's amazed at her cleverness!'

'A nest for three?'

'We must have a friend or two.'

'And pretty country?'

'Trust her papa for that.'

'Nice for walking and running over fields? No rich people?'

'How escape that rabble in England! as Colney says. It's a place for being quite independent of neighbours, free as air.'

'Oh! bravo!'

'And Fredi will have her horse, and mama her pony-carriage; and Fredi can have a swim every Summer morning.'

'A swim?' Her note was dubious. 'A river?'

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'A good long stretch—fairish, fairish. Bit of a lake; bathing-shed; the Naïad's bower: pretty water to see.' CHAPTER VI Nately

'Ah. And has the house a name?'

'Lakelands. I like the name.'

'Papa gave it the name!'

'There's nothing he can conceal from his girl. Only now and then a little surprise.'

'And his girl is off her head with astonishment. But tell me, who has been sharing the secret with you?'

'Fredi strikes home! And it is true, you dear; I must have a confidant: Simeon Fenellan.'

'Not Mr. Durance?'

He shook out a positive negative. 'I leave Colney to his guesses. He'd have been prophesying fire to the works before the completion.'

'Then it is not a dear old house, like Craye and Creckholt?'

'Wait and see to-morrow.'

He spoke of the customary guests for Concert practice; the music, instrumental and vocal; quartet, duet, solo; and advising the girl to be quick, as she had but twenty-five minutes, he went humming and trilling into his dressing-room.

Nesta signalled at her mother's door for permission to enter. She slipped in, saw that the maid was absent, and said: 'Yes, mama; and prepare, I feared it; I was sure.'

Her mother breathed a little moan: 'Not a cottage?'

'He has not mentioned it to Mr. Durance.'

'Why not?'

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CHAPTER VI Nataly

'Mr. Fenellan has been his confidant.'

'My darling, we did wrong to let it go on, without speaking. You don't know for certain yet?'

'It's a large estate, mama, and a big new house.'

Nataly's bosom sank. 'Ah me! here's misery! I ought to have known. And too late now it has gone so far! But I never imagined he would be building.'

She caught herself languishing at her toilette-glass, as if her beauty were at stake; and shut her eyelids angrily. To be looking in that manner, for a mere suspicion, was too foolish. But Nesta's divinations were target-arrows; they flew to the mark. Could it have been expected that Victor would ever do anything on a small scale? O the dear little lost lost cottage! She thought of it with a strain of the arms of womanhood's longing in the unblessed wife for a babe. For the secluded modest cottage would not rack her with the old anxieties, beset her with suspicions. . . .

'My child, you won't possibly have time before the dinner-hour,' she said to Nesta, dismissing her and taking her kiss of comfort with a short and straining look out of the depths.

Those bitter doubts of the sentiments of neighbours are an incipient dislike, when one's own feelings to the neighbours are kind, could be affectionate. We are distracted, perverted, made strangers to ourselves by a false position.

She heard his voice on a carol. Men do not feel this doubtful position as women must. They have not the same to endure; the world gives them land to tread, where women are on breaking seas. Her Nesta

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knew no more than the pain of being torn from a home she loved. But now the girl was older, and if once she had her imagination awakened, her fearful directness would touch the spot, question, bring on the scene to-come, necessarily to-come, dreaded much more than death by her mother. But if it might be postponed till the girl was nearer to an age of grave understanding, with some knowledge of our world, some comprehension of a case that could be pleaded!—

He sang: he never acknowledged a trouble, he dispersed it; and in her present wrestle with the scheme of a large country estate involving new intimacies, anxieties, the courtship of rival magnates, followed by the wretched old cloud, and the imposition upon them to bear it in silence though they knew they could plead a case, at least before charitable and discerning creatures or before heaven, the despondent lady could have asked whether he was perfectly sane.

Who half so brilliantly! — Depreciation of him, fetched up at a stroke the glittering armies of her enthusiasm.—He had proved it; he proved it daily in conflicts and in victories that dwarfed emotional troubles like hers: yet they were something to bear, hard to bear, at times unbearable.

But those were times of weakness. Let anything be doubted rather than the good guidance of the man who was her breath of life! Whither he led, let her go, not only submissively, exultingly.

Thus she thought, under pressure of the knowledge, that unless rushing into conflicts bigger than conceivable, she had to do it, and should therefore think it.

This was the prudent woman's clear deduction from

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CHAPTER VI Nataly

the state wherein she found herself, created by the one first great step of the mad woman. Her surrender then might be likened to the detachment of a flower on the river's bank by swell of flood: she had no longer root of her own; away she sailed, through beautiful scenery, with occasionally a crashing fall, a turmoil, emergence from a vortex, and once more the sunny whirling surface. Strange to think, she had not since then power to grasp in her abstract mind a notion of stedfastness without or within.

But, say not the mad, say the enamoured woman. Love is a madness, having heaven's wisdom in it—a spark. But even when it is driving us on the breakers, call it love: and be not unworthy of it, hold to it. She and Victor had drunk of a cup. The philtre was in her veins, whatever the directions of the rational mind.

Exulting or regretting, she had to do it, as one in the car with a racing charioteer. Or up beside a more than Titanically audacious balloonist. For the charioteer is bent on a goal; and Victor's course was an ascension from heights to heights. He had ideas, he mastered Fortune. He conquered Nataly and held her subject, in being above his ambition; which was now but an occupation for his powers, while the aim of his life was at the giving and taking of simple enjoyment. In spite of his fits of unreasonableness in the means—and the woman loving him could trace them to a breadth of nature—his gentle good friendly innocent aim in life was of this very simplest; so wonderful, by contrast with his powers, that she, assured of it as she was by experience of him, was touched, in a transfusion of her feelings through lucent globes of admiration and of tenderness, to reverence.

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There had been occasions when her wish for the whole world to have proof and exhibition of his greatness, goodness, and simplicity amid his gifts, prompted her incitement of him to stand forth eminently ('lead a kingdom,' was the phrase behind the curtain within her shy bosom); and it revealed her to herself, upon reflection, as being still the Nataly who drank the cup with him, to join her fate with his.

And why not? Was that regretted? Far from it. In her maturity, the woman was unable to send forth any dwelling thought or more than a flight of twilight fancy, that cancelled the deed of her youth, and therewith seemed to expunge near upon the half of her term of years. If it came to consideration of her family and the family's opinion of her conduct, her judgement did not side with them or with herself, it whirled, swam to a giddiness and subsided.

Of course, if she and Victor were to inhabit a large country-house, they might as well have remained at Craye Farm or at Creckholt; both places dear to them in turn. Such was the plain sense of the surface question. And how strange it was to her, that he, of the most quivering sensitiveness on her behalf, could not see, that he threw her into situations where hard words of men and women threatened about her head; where one or two might on a day, some day, be heard; and where, in the recollection of two years back, the word 'Impostor' had smacked her on both cheeks from her own mouth.

Now once more they were to run the same round of alarms, undergo the love of the place, with perpetual apprehensions of having to leave it: alarms, throbbing suspicions, like those of old travellers through the

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haunted forest, where whispers have intensity of meaning, and unseeing we are seen, and unaware awaited.

Nataly shook the rolls of her thick brown hair from her forehead; she took strength from a handsome look of resolution in the glass. She could always honestly say, that her courage would not fail him.

Victor tapped at the door; he stepped into the room, wearing his evening white flower over a more open white waistcoat; and she was composed and uninquiring. Their Nesta was heard on the descent of the stairs, with a rattle of Donizetti's *Il segreto* to the skylights.

He performed his never-omitted lover's homage.

Nataly enfolded him in a homely smile. 'A country-house? We go and see it to-morrow?'

'And you've been pining for a country home, my dear soul.'

'After the summer six weeks, the house in London does not seem a home to return to.'

'And next day, Nataly draws five thousand pounds for the first sketch of the furniture.'

'There is the Creckholt . . .' she had a difficulty in saying.

'Part of it may do. Lakelands requires—but you will see to-morrow.'

After a close shutting of her eyes, she rejoined: 'It is not a cottage?'

'Well, dear, no: when the Slave of the Lamp takes to building, he does not run up cottages. And we did it without magic, all in a year; which is quite as good as a magical trick in a night.' He drew her close to him. 'When was it my dear girl guessed me at work?'

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'It was the other dear girl. Nesta is the guesser.'

'You were two best of souls to keep from bothering me; and I might have had to fib; and we neither of us like that.' He noticed a sidling of her look. 'More than the circumstances oblige:—to be frank. But now we can speak of them. Wait—and the change comes; and opportunely, I have found. It's true we have waited long; my darling has had her worries. However, it's here at last. Prepare yourself. I speak positively. You have to brace up for one sharp twitch—*the woman's portion!* as Natata says—and it's over.' He looked into her eyes for comprehension; and not finding inquiry, resumed: 'Just in time for the entry into Lakelands. With the pronouncement of the decree, we present the licence . . . at an altar we've stood before, in spirit . . . one of the ladies of your family to support you:—why not? Not even then?'

'No, Victor; they have cast me off.'

'Count on my cousins, the Duvidney ladies. Then we can say, that those two good old spinsters are less narrow than the Dreightons. I have to confess I rather think I was to blame for leaving Creckholt. Only, if I see my girl wounded, I hate the place that did the mischief. You and Fredi will clap hands for the country about Lakelands.'

'Have you heard from her . . . of her . . . is it anything, Victor?' Nataly asked him shyly; with not much of hope, but some readiness to be inflated. The prospect of an entry into the big new house, among a new society, begirt by the old nightmares and fretting devils, drew her into staring daylight or furnace-light.

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He answered: 'Mrs. Burman has definitively decided. In pity of us?—to be free herself?—who can say! She's a woman with a conscience—of a kind: slow, but it brings her to the point at last. You know her, know her well. Fenellan has it from her lawyer—her lawyer! a Mr. Carling; a thoroughly trustworthy man.'

'Fenellan, as a reporter?'

'Thoroughly to be trusted on serious matters. I understand that Mrs. Burman:—her health is awful: yes, yes; poor woman! poor woman! we feel for her:—she has come to perceive her duty to those she leaves behind. Consider: she *has* used the rod. She must be tired out—if human. And she is. One remembers traits.'

Victor sketched one or two of the traits allusively to the hearer acquainted with them. They received strong colouring from mid-day's Old Veuve in his blood. His voice and words had a swing of conviction: they imparted vinousness to a heart athirst.

The histrionic self-deceiver may be a persuasive deceiver of another, who is again, though not ignorant of his character, tempted to swallow the nostrums which have made so gallant a man of him: his imperceptible sensible playing of the part, on a substratum of sincereness, induces fascinatingly to the like performance on our side, that we may be armed as he is for enjoying the coveted reality through the partial simulation of possessing it. And this is not a task to us when we have looked our actor in the face, and seen him bear the look, knowing that he is not intentionally untruthful; and when we incline to be captivated by his rare theatrical air of confid-

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ence; when it seems as an outside thought striking us, that he may not be altogether deceived in the present instance; when suddenly an expectation of the thing desired is born and swims in a credible featureless vagueness on a misty scene: and when we are being kissed and the blood is warmed. In fine, here as everywhere along our history, when the sensations are spirited up to drown the mind, we become drift-matter of tides, metal to magnets. And if we are women, who commonly allow the lead to men, getting it for themselves only by snaky cunning or desperate adventure, credulity—the continued trust in the man — is the alternative of despair.

'But, Victor, I must ask,' Nataly said: 'you have it through Simeon Fenellan; you have not yourself received the letter from her lawyer?'

'My knowledge of what she would do near the grave:—poor soul, yes! I shall soon be hearing.'

'You do not propose to enter this place until—until it is over?'

'We enter this place, my love, without any sort of ceremony. We live there independently, and we can: we have quarters there for our friends. Our one neighbour is London—there! And at Lakelands we are able to entertain London and wife;—our friends, in short; with some, what we have to call, satellites. You inspect the house and grounds to-morrow—sure to be fair. Put aside all but the pleasant recollections of Craye and Creckholt. We start on a different footing. Really nothing can be simpler. Keeping your town-house, you are now and then in residence at Lakelands, where you entertain your set, teach

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them to feel the charm of country life: we have everything about us; could have had our own milk and cream up to London the last two months. Was it very naughty?—I should have exploded my surprise! You will see, you will see to-morrow.'

Nataly nodded, as required. 'Good news from the mines?' she said.

He answered: 'Dartrey is—yes, poor fellow!—Dartrey is confident, from the yield of stones, that the value of our claim counts in a number of millions. The same with the gold. But gold-mines are lodgeings, not homes.'

'Oh, Victor! if money . . .! But why did you say "poor fellow" of Dartrey Fenellan?'

'You know how he's . . .'

'Yes, yes,' she said hastily. 'But has that woman been causing fresh anxiety?'

'And Natata's chief hero on earth is not to be named a poor fellow,' said he, after a negative of the head on a subject they neither of them liked to touch.

Then he remembered that Dartrey Fenellan was actually a lucky fellow; and he would have mentioned the circumstance confided to him by Simeon, but for a downright dread of renewing his painful fit of envy. He had also another, more distant, very faint idea, that it had better not be mentioned just yet, for a reason entirely undefined.

He consulted his watch. The maid had come in for the robeing of her mistress. Nataly's mind had turned to the little country cottage which would have given her such great happiness. She raised her eyes to him; she could not check their filling; they were

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like a river carrying moonlight on the smooth roll of a fall.

He loved the eyes, disliked the water in them. With an impatient 'There, there!' and a smart affectionate look, he retired, thinking in our old satirical vein of the hopeless endeavour to satisfy a woman's mind without the intrusion of hard material statements, facts. Even the best of women, even the most beautiful, and in their moments of supremest beauty, have this gross ravenousness for facts. You must not expect to appease them unless you administer solids. It would almost appear that man is exclusively imaginative and poetical; and that his mate, the fair, the graceful, the bewitching, with the sweetest and purest of natures, cannot help being something of a groveller.

Nataly had likewise her thoughts.

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Rather earlier in the afternoon of that day, Simeon Fenellan, thinking of the many things which are nothing, and so melancholy for lack of amusements properly to follow Old Veuve, that he could ask himself whether he had not done a deed of night, to be blinking at his fellow-men like an owl all mad for the reveller's hoots and flights and mice and moony roundels behind his hypocritical judex air of moping composure, chanced on Mr. Carling, the solicitor,

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where Lincoln's Inn pumps lawyers into Fleet Street through the drain-pipe of Chancery Lane. He was in the state of the wine when a shake will rouse the sluggish sparkles to foam. Sight of Mrs. Burman's legal adviser had instantly this effect upon him: his bubbling friendliness for Victor Radnor, and the desire of the voice in his bosom for ears to hear, combined like the rush of two waves together, upon which he may be figured as the boat: he caught at Mr. Carling's hand more heartily than their acquaintanceship quite sanctioned; but his grasp and his look of overflowing were immediately privileged; Mr. Carling, enjoying this anecdotal gentleman's conversation as he did, liked the warmth, and was flattered during the squeeze with a prospect of his wife and friends partaking of the fun from time to time.

'I was telling my wife yesterday your story of the lady-contrabandist: I don't think she has done laughing since,' Mr. Carling said.

Fenellan fluted: 'Ah?' He had scent, in the eulogy of a story grown flat as Election hats, of a good sort of man in the way of men, a step or two behind the man of the world. He expressed profound regret at not having heard the silvery ring of the lady's laughter.

Carling genially conceived a real gratification to be conferred on his wife. 'Perhaps you will some day honour us?'

'You spread gold-leaf over the days to come, sir.'

'Now, if I might name the day?'

'You lump the gold and make it current coin;—says the blushing bride, who ought not to have delivered herself so boldly, but she had forgotten her

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bashful part and spoilt the scene, though, luckily for the damsel, her swain was a lover of nature, and finding her at full charge, he named the very next day of the year, and held her to it, like the complimentary tyrant he was.'

'To-morrow, then!' said Carling intrepidly, on a dash of enthusiasm, through a haggard thought of his wife and the cook and the netting of friends at short notice. He urged his eagerness to ask whether he might indeed have the satisfaction of naming to-morrow.

'With happiness,' Fenellan responded.

Mrs. Carling was therefore in for it.

'To-morrow, half-past seven: as for company to meet you, we will do what we can. You go Westward?'

'To bed with the sun,' said the reveller.

'Perhaps by Covent Garden? I must give orders there.'

'Orders given in Covent Garden, paint a picture for bachelors of the domestic Paradise an angel must help them to enter! Ah, dear me! Is there anything on earth to compare with the pride of a virtuous life?'

'I was married at four and twenty,' said Carling, as one taking up the expository second verse of a poem; plain facts, but weighty and necessary: 'my wife was in her twentieth year: we have five children; two sons, three daughters, one married, with a baby. So we are grandfather and mother, and have never regretted the first step, I may say for both of us.'

'Think of it! Good luck and sagacity joined hands overhead on the day you proposed to the lady: and

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I'd say, that all the credit is with her, but that it would seem to be at the expense of her sex.'

'She would be the last to wish it, I assure you.'

'True of all good women! You encourage me, touching a matter of deep interest, not unknown to you. The lady's warm heart will be with us. Probably she sees Mrs. Burman?'

'Mrs. Burman Radnor receives no one.'

A comic severity in the tone of the correction was deferentially accepted by Fenellan.

'Pardon. She flies her flag, with her captain wanting; and she has, queerly, the right. So, then, the worthy dame who receives no one, might be treated, it struck us, conversationally, as a respectable harbour-hulk, with more history than top-honours. But she has the indubitable legal right to fly them—to proclaim it; for it means little else.'

'You would have her, if I follow you, divest herself of the name?'

'Pin me to no significations, if you please, O shrewdest of the legal sort! I have wit enough to escape you there. She is no doubt an estimable person.'

'Well, she is; she is in her way a very good woman.'

'Ah. You see, Mr. Carling, I cannot bring myself to rank her beside another lady, who has already claimed the title of me; and you will forgive me if I say, that your word "good" has a look of being stuck upon the features we know of her, like a coquette's naughty patch; or it's a jewel of an eye in an ebony idol: though I've heard tell she performs her charities.'

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'I believe she gives away three parts of her income: and that is large.'

'Leaving the good lady a fine fat fourth.'

'Compare her with other wealthy people.'

'And does she outshine the majority still with her personal attractions?'

Carling was instigated by the praise he had bestowed on his wife to separate himself from a female pretender so ludicrous; he sought Fenellan's nearest ear, emitting the sound of 'hum.'

'In other respects, unimpeachable!'

'Oh! quite!'

'There was a fishfag of classic Billingsgate, who had broken her husband's nose with a sledge-hammer fist, and swore before the magistrate, that the man hadn't a crease to complain of in her character. We are condemned, Mr. Carling, sometimes to suffer in the flesh for the assurance we receive of the inviolability of those moral fortifications.'

'Character, yes, valuable—I do wish you had named to-night for doing me the honour of dining with me!' said the lawyer impulsively, in a rapture of the appetite for anecdotes. 'I have a ripe Pichon Longueville, '65.'

'A fine wine. Seductive to hear of. I dine with my friend Victor Radnor. And he knows wine.—There are good women in the world, Mr. Carling, whose characters . . .'

'Of course, of course there are; and I could name you some. We lawyers . . .!'

'You encounter all sorts.'

'Between ourselves,' Carling sank his tones to the

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indiscriminate, where it mingled with the roar of London.

'You do?' Fenellan hazarded a guess at having heard enlightened liberal opinions regarding the sex. 'Right!'

'Many!'

'I back you, Mr. Carling.'

The lawyer pushed to yet more confidential communication, up to the verge of the clearly audible: he spoke of examples, experiences. Fenellan backed him further.

'Acting on behalf of clients, you understand, Mr. Fenellan.'

'Professional, but charitable; I am with you.'

'Poor things! we—if we have to condemn—we owe them something.'

'A kind word for poor Polly Venus, with all the world against her! She doesn't hear it often.'

'A real service,' Carling's voice deepened to the legal 'without prejudice,'—'I am bound to say it—a service to Society.'

'Ah, poor wench! And the kind of reward she gets?'

'We can hardly examine . . . mysterious dispensations . . . here we are to make the best we can of it.'

'For the creature Society's indebted to? True. And am I to think there's a body of legal gentlemen to join with you, my friend, in founding an Institution to distribute funds to preach charity over the country, and win compassion for her, as one of the principal persons of her time, that Society's indebted to for whatever it's indebted for?'

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'Scarcely that,' said Carling, contracting.

'But you're for great Reforms?'

'Gradual.'

'Then it's for Reformatories, mayhap.'

'They would hardly be a cure.'

'You're in search of a cure?'

'It would be a blessed discovery.'

'But what's to become of Society?'

'It's a puzzle to the cleverest.'

'All through History, my dear Mr. Carling, we see that Establishments must have their sacrifices. Beware of interfering: eh?'

'By degrees, we may hope . . .'

'Society prudently shuns the topic; and so'll we. For we might tell of one another, in a fit of distraction, that t' other one talked of it, and we should be banished for an offence against propriety. You should read my friend Durance's Essay on Society. Lawyers are a buttress of Society. But, come: I wager they don't know what they support until they read that Essay.'

Carling had a pleasant sense of escape, in not being personally asked to read the Essay, and not hearing that a copy of it should be forwarded to him.

He said: 'Mr. Radnor is a very old friend?'

'Our fathers were friends; they served in the same regiment for years. I was in India when Victor Radnor took the fatal!'

'Followed by a second, not less . . .?'

'In the interpretation of a rigid morality arming you legal gentlemen to make it so!'

'The Law must be vindicated.'

'The law is a clumsy bludgeon.'

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'We think it the highest effort of human reason—the practical instrument.'

'You may compare it to a rustic's finger on a fiddle-string, for the murdered notes you get out of the practical instrument.'

'I am bound to defend it, clumsy bludgeon or not.'

'You are one of the giants to wield it, and feel humanly, when, by chance, down it comes on the foot an inch off the line.—Here 's a peep of Old London; if the habit of old was not to wash windows. I like these old streets.'

'Hum,' Carling hesitated. 'I can remember when the dirt at the windows was appalling.'

'Appealing to the same kind of stuff in the passing youngster's green-scum eye: it was. And there your Law did good work.—You 're for Bordeaux. What is your word on Burgundy?'

'Our Falernian!'

'Victor Radnor has the oldest in the kingdom. But he will have the best of everything. A Romanée! A Musigny! Sip, my friend, you embrace the Goddess of your choice above. You are up beside her at a sniff of that wine.—And lo, venerable Drury! we duck through the court, reminded a bit by our feelings of our first love, who hadn't the cleanest of faces or nicest of manners, but she takes her station in memory because we were boys then, and the golden halo of youth is upon her.'

Carling, as a man of the world, acquiesced in souvenirs he did not share. He said urgently: 'Understand me; you speak of Mr. Radnor; pray, believe I have the greatest respect for Mr. Radnor's abilities. He is one of our foremost men . . . proud of him.

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Mr. Radnor has genius; I have watched him; it is genius; he shows it in all he does; one of the memorable men of our time. I can admire him, independent of—well, misfortunes of that kind . . . a mistaken early step. Misfortune, it is to be named. Between ourselves—we are men of the world—if one could see the way! She occasionally . . . as I have told you. I have ventured suggestions. As I have mentioned, I have received an impression . . .'

'But still, Mr. Carling, if the lady doesn't release him and will keep his name, she might stop her cowardly persecutions.'

'Can you trace them?'

'Undisguised!'

'Mrs. Burman Radnor is devout. I should not exactly say revengeful. We have to discriminate. I gather, that her animus is, in all honesty, directed at the—I quote—state of sin. We are mixed, you know.'

The Winegod in the blood of Fenellan gave a leap. 'But, fifty thousand times more mixed, she might any moment stop the state of sin, as she calls it, if it pleased her.'

'She might try. Our Judges look suspiciously on long-delayed actions. And there are, too, women who regard the marriage-tie as indissoluble. She has had to combat that scruple.'

'Believer in the renewing of the engagement overhead!—well. But put a by-word to Mother Nature about the state of sin. Where, do you imagine, she would lay it? You 'll say, that Nature and Law never agreed. They ought.'

'The latter deferring to the former?'

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'Moulding itself on her swelling proportions. My dear dear sir, *the* state of sin was the continuing to live in defiance of, in contempt of, in violation of, in the total degradation of, Nature.'

'He was under no enforcement to take the oath at the altar.'

'He was a small boy tempted by a varnished widow, with pounds of barley-sugar in her pocket; —and she already serving as a test-vessel or mortar for awful combinations in druggery! Gilt widows are equal to decrees of Fate to us young ones. Upon my word, the cleric who unites, and the Law that sanctions, they're the criminals. Victor Radnor is the noblest of fellows, the very best friend a man can have. I will tell you: he saved me, after I left the army, from living on the produce of my pen—which means, if there is to be any produce, the prostrating of yourself to the level of the round middle of the public: saved me from that! Yes, Mr. Carling, I have trotted our thoroughfares a poor Polly of the pen; and it is owing to Victor Radnor that I can order my thoughts as an individual man again before I blacken paper. Owing to him, I have a tenderness for mercenaries; having been one of them and knowing how little we can help it. He is an Olympian—who thinks of them below. The lady also is an admirable woman at all points. The pair are a mated couple, such as you won't find in ten households over Christendom. Are you aware of the story?'

Carling replied: 'A story under shadow of the Law, has generally two very distinct versions.'

'Hear mine.—And, by Jove! a runaway cab. No, all right. But a crazy cab it is, and fit to do mischief

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in narrow Drury. Except that it's sheer riff-raff here to knock over.'

'Hulloa?—come!' quoth the wary lawyer.

'There's the heart I wanted to rouse to hear me! One may be sure that the man for old Burgundy has it big and sound, in spite of his legal practices; a dear good spherical fellow! Some day, we'll hope, you will be sitting with us over a magnum of Victor Radnor's Romanée Conti aged thirty-one: a wine, you'll say at the second glass, High Priest for the celebration of the uncommon nuptials between the body and the soul of man.'

'You hit me rightly,' said Carling, tickled and touched; sensually excited by the bouquet of Victor Radnor's hospitality and companionship, which added flavour to Fenellan's compliments. These came home to him through his desire to be the 'good spherical fellow'; for he, like modern diplomatists in the track of their eminent Berlinese New Type of the time, put on frankness as an armour over wariness, holding craft in reserve: his aim was at the refreshment of honest fellowship: by no means to discover that the coupling of his native bias with his professional duty was unprofitable nowadays. Wariness, however, was not somnolent, even when he said: 'You know, I am never the lawyer out of my office. Man of the world to men of the world; and I have not lost by it. I am Mrs. Burman Radnor's legal adviser: you are Mr. Victor Radnor's friend. They are, as we see them, not on the best of terms. I would rather—at its lowest, as a matter of business—be known for having helped them to some kind of footing than send in a round bill to my client—or

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another. I gain more in the end. Frankly, I mean to prove, that it's a lawyer's interest to be human.'

'Because, now, see!' said Fenellan, 'here's the case. Miss Natalia Dreighton, of a good Yorkshire family—a large one, reads an advertisement for the post of companion to a lady, and answers it, and engages herself, previous to the appearance of the young husband. Miss Dreighton is one of the finest young women alive. She has a glorious contralto voice. Victor and she are encouraged by Mrs. Burman to sing duets together. Well? Why, Euclid would have theorem'd it out for you at a glance at the trio. You have only to look on them, you chatter out your three Acts of a Drama without a stop. If Mrs. Burman cares to practise charity, she has only to hold in her Fury-forked tongue, or her Jarniman I think's the name . . .'

Carling shrugged.

'Let her keep from striking, if she's Christian,' pursued Fenellan, 'and if kind let her resume the name of her first lord, who did a better thing for himself than for her, when he shook off his bars of bullion, to rise the lighter, and left a wretched female soul below, with the devil's own testimony to her attractions—thousands in the Funds, houses in the City. She threw the young couple together. And my friend Victor Radnor is of a particularly inflammable nature. Imagine one of us in such a situation, Mr. Carling!'

'Trying!' said the lawyer.

'The dear fellow was as nigh death as a man can be and know the sweetness of a woman's call to him to live.—And here's London's garden of pines, bananas,

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oranges; all the droppings of the Hesperides here! We don't reflect on it, Mr. Carling.'

'Not enough, not enough.'

'I feel such a spout of platitudes that I could out with a Leading Article on a sheet of paper on your back while you're bending over the baskets. I seem to have got circularly round again to Eden when I enter a garden. Only, here we have to pay for the fruits we pluck. Well, and just the same there; and no end to the payment either. We're always paying! By the way, Mrs. Victor Radnor's dinner-table's a spectacle. Her taste in flowers equals her lord's in wine. But age improves the wine and spoils the flowers, you'll say. Maybe you're for arguing that lovely women show us more of the flower than the grape, in relation to the course of time. I pray you not to forget the terrible intoxicant she is. We reconcile it, Mr. Carling, with the notion that the grape's her spirit, the flower her body. Or is it the reverse? Perhaps an intertwining. But look upon bouquets and clusters, and the idea of woman springs up at once, proving she's composed of them. I was about to remark, that with deference to the influence of Mrs. Burman's legal adviser, an impenitent or penitent sinner's pastor, the Reverend gentleman ministering to her spiritual needs, would presumptively exercise it, in this instance, in a superior degree.'

Carling murmured: 'The Rev. Groseman Buttermore'; and did so for something of a cover, to continue a run of internal reflections: as, that he was assuredly listening to vinous talk in the streets by day; which impression placed him on a decorous

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platform above the amusing gentleman; to whom, however, he grew cordial, in recognizing consequently, that his exuberant flow could hardly be a mask; and that an indication here and there of a trap in his talk, must have been due rather to excess of wariness, habitual in the mind of a long-headed man, whose incorrigibly impulsive fits had necessarily to be rectified by a vigilant dexterity.

'Buttermore!' ejaculated Fenellan: 'Groseman Buttermore! Mrs. Victor's Father Confessor is the Rev. Septimus Barmby. Groseman Buttermore—Septimus Barmby. Is there anything in names? Truly, unless these clerical gentlemen take them up at the crossing of the roads long after birth, the names would appear the active parts of them, and themselves mere marching supports, like the bearers of street placard-advertisements. Now, I know a Septimus Barmby, and you a Groseman Buttermore, and beyond the fact that Reverend starts up before their names without mention, I wager it's about all we do know of them. They're Society's trusty rock-limpets, no doubt.'

'My respect for the cloth is extreme.' Carling's short cough prepared the way for deductions. 'Between ourselves, they are not men of the world.'

Fenellan eyed benevolently the worthy attorney, whose innermost imp burst out periodically, like a Dutch clock-sentry, to trot on his own small grounds for thinking himself of the community of the man of the world. 'You lawyers dress in another closet,' he said. 'The Rev. Groseman has the ear of the lady?'

'He has:—one ear.'

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'Ah? She has the other open for a man of the world, perhaps.'

'Listens to him, listens to me, listens to Jarniman; and we neither of us guide her. She's very curious—a study. You think you know her—next day she has eluded you. She's emotional, she's hard; she's a woman, she's a stone. Anything you like; but don't count on her. And another thing—I'm bound to say it of myself,' Carling claimed close hearing of Fenellan over a shelf of salad-stuff, 'no one who comes near her has any real weight with her in this matter.'

'Probably you mix cream in your salad of the vinegar and oil,' said Fenellan. 'Try jelly of mutton.'

'You give me a new idea. Latterly, fond as I am of salads, I've had rueful qualms. We'll try it.'

'You should dine with Victor Radnor.'

'French cook, of course.'

'Cordon bleu.'

'I like to be sure of my cutlet.'

'I like to be sure of a tastiness in my vegetables.'

'And good sauces!'

'And pretty pastry. I said, Cordon bleu. The miracle is, it's a woman that Victor Radnor has trained: French, but a woman; devoted to him, as all who serve him are. Do I say "but" a woman? There's not a Frenchman alive to match her. Vatel awaits her in Paradise with his arms extended: and may he wait long!'

Carling indulged his passion for the genuine by letting a flutter of real envy be seen. 'My wife would like to meet such a Frenchwoman. It must be a privilege to dine with him—to know him. I know what

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CHAPTER VII Between a General Man of the World and a Professional

he has done for English Commerce, and to build a colossal fortune: genius, as I said: and his donations to Institutions. Odd, to read his name and Mrs. Burman Radnor's at separate places in the lists! Well, we'll hope. It's a case for a compromise of sentiments and claims.'

'A friend of mine, spiced with cynic, declares that there's always an amicable way out of a dissension, if we get rid of Lupus and Vulpus.'

Carling spied for a trap in the citation of Lupus and Vulpus; he saw none, and named the square of his residence on the great Russell property, and the number of the house, the hour of dinner next day. He then hung silent, breaking the pause with his hand out and a sharp 'Well?' that rattled a whirligig sound in his head upward. His leave of people was taken in this laughing falsetto, as of one affected by the curious end things come to.

Fenellan thought of him for a moment or two, that he was a better than the common kind of lawyer; who doubtless knew as much of the wrong side of the world as lawyers do, and held his knowledge for the being a man of the world:—as all do, that have not Alpine heights in the mind to mount for a look out over their own and the world's pedestrian tracks. I could spot the lawyer in your composition, my friend, to the exclusion of the man, he mused. But you're right in what you mean to say of yourself: you're a good fellow, for a lawyer, and together we may manage somehow to score a point of service to Victor Radnor.

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CHAPTER VIII

Some Familiar Guests

Nesta read her mother's face when Mrs. Victor entered the drawing-room to receive the guests. She saw a smooth fair surface, of the kind as much required by her father's eyes as innocuous air by his nostrils: and it was honest skin, not the deceptive feminine veiling, to make a dear man happy over his volcano. Mrs. Victor was to meet the friends with whom her feelings were at home, among whom her musical gifts gave her station: they liked her for herself; they helped her to feel at home with herself and be herself: a rarer condition with us all than is generally supposed. So she could determine to be cheerful in the anticipation of an evening that would at least be restful to the outworn sentinel nerve of her heart, which was perpetually alert and signalling to the great organ; often colouring the shows and seems of adverse things for an apeing of reality with too cruel a resemblance. One of the scraps of practical wisdom gained by hardened sufferers is, to keep from spying at horizons when they drop into a pleasant dingle. Such is the comfort of it, that we can dream, and lull our fears, and half think what we wish: and it is a heavenly truce with the fretful mind divided from our wishes.

Nesta wondered at her mother's complacent questions concerning this Lakelands: the house, the county, the kind of people about, the features of the country. Physically unable herself to be regretful under a burden three parts enrapturing her, the girl expected

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her mother to display a shadowy vexation, with a proud word or two, that would summon her thrilling sympathy in regard to the fourth part: namely, the aristocratic iciness of country magnates, who took them up and cast them off; as they had done, she thought, at Craye Farm and at Creckholt: she remembered it, of the latter place, wincingly, insurgently, having loved the dear home she had been expelled from by the pride of the frosty surrounding people—or no, not all, but some of them. And what had roused their pride?

Striking for a reason, her inexperience of our modern England, supplemented by readings in the England of a preceding generation, had hit on her father's profession of merchant. It accounted to her for the behaviour of the haughty territorial and titled families. But certain of the minor titles headed City Firms, she had heard; certain of the families were avowedly commercial. 'They follow suit,' her father said at Creckholt, after he had found her mother weeping, and decided instantly to quit and fly once more. But if they followed suit in such a way, then Mr. Durance must be right when he called the social English the most sheepy of sheep:—and Nesta could not consent to the cruel verdict, she adored her compatriots. Incongruities were pacified for her by the suggestion of her quick wits, that her father, besides being a merchant, was a successful speculator; and perhaps the speculator is not liked by merchants; or they were jealous of him; or they did not like his being both.

She pardoned them with some tenderness, on a suspicion that a quaint old high-frilled bleached and

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puckered Puritanical rectitude (her thoughts rose in pictures) possibly condemned the speculator as a description of gambler. An erratic severity in ethics is easily overlooked by the enthusiast for things old English. She was consciously ahead of them in the knowledge that her father had been, without the taint of gambling, a beneficent speculator. The Montgomery colony in South Africa, and his dealings with the natives in India, and his Railways in South America, his establishment of Insurance Offices, which were Savings Banks, and the Stores for the dispensing of sound goods to the poor, attested it. O and he was hospitable, the kindest, helpfullest of friends, the dearest, the very brightest of parents: he was his girl's playmate. She could be critic of him, for an induction to the loving of him more justly: yet if he had an excessive desire to win the esteem of people, as these keen young optics perceived in him, he strove to deserve it; and no one could accuse him of laying stress on the benefits he conferred. Designedly, frigidly to wound a man so benevolent, appeared to her as an incomprehensible baseness. The dropping of acquaintanceship with him, after the taste of its privileges, she ascribed, in the void of any better elucidation, to a mania of aristocratic conceit. It drove her, despite her youthful contempt of politics, into a Radicalism that could find food in the epigrams of Mr. Colney Durance, even when they passed her understanding; or when he was not too distinctly seen by her to be shooting at all the parties of her beloved England, beneath the wicked semblance of shielding each by turns.

The young gentleman introduced to the Radnor

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CHAPTER VIII Some Familiar Guests

Concert-parties by Lady Grace Halley as the Hon. Dudley Sowerby, had to bear the sins of his class. Though he was tall, straight-featured, correct in costume, appearance, deportment, second son of a religious earl and no scandal to the parentage, he was less noticed by Nesta than the elderly and the commoners. Her father accused her of snubbing him. She reproduced her famous copy of the sugared acid of Mr. Dudley Sowerby's closed mouth: a sort of sneer in meekness, as of humility under legitimate compulsion; deploring Christianly a pride of race that stamped it for this cowled exhibition: the wonderful mimicry was a flash thrown out by a born mistress of the art, and her mother was constrained to laugh, and so was her father; but he wilfully denied the likeness. He charged her with encouraging Colney Durance to drag forth the sprig of nobility, in the nakedness of evicted shell-fish, on themes of the peril to England, possibly ruin, through the loss of that ruling initiative formerly possessed, in the days of our glory, by the titular nobles of the land. Colney spoke it effectively, and the Hon. Dudley's expressive lineaments showed print of the heaving word Alas, as when a target is penetrated centrally. And he was not a particularly dull fellow 'for his class and country,' Colney admitted; adding: 'I hit his thought and out he came.' One has, reluctantly with Victor Radnor, to grant, that when a man's topmost unspoken thought is hit, he must be sharp on his guard to keep from coming out:—we have won a right to him.

'Only, it's too bad; it's a breach of hospitality,' Victor said, both to Nesta and to Nataly, alluding to several instances of Colney's ironic handling of their

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guests, especially of this one, whom Nesta would attack, and Nataly would not defend.

They were alive at a signal to protect the others. Miss Priscilla Graves, an eater of meat, was ridiculous in her ant'alcoholic exclusiveness and scorn: Mr. Pempton, a drinker of wine, would laud extravagantly the more transparent purity of vegetarianism. Dr. Peter Yatt jeered at globules: Dr. John Cormyn mourned over human creatures treated as cattle by big doses. The Rev. Septimus Barmby satisfactorily smoked: Mr. Peridon traced mortal evil to that act. Dr. Schlesien had his German views, Colney Durance his ironic, Fenellan his fanciful and free-lance. And here was an optimist, there a pessimist; and the rank Radical, the rigid Conservative, were not wanting. All of them were pointedly opposed, extraordinarily for so small an assembly: absurdly, it might be thought: but these provoked a kind warm smile, with the exclamation: 'They are dears!' They were the dearer for their fads and foibles.

Music harmonized them. Music, strangely, put the spell on Colney Durance, the sayer of bitter things, manufacturer of prickly balls, in the form of Discord's apples: of whom Fenellan remarked, that he took to his music like an angry little boy to his barley-sugar, with a growl and a grunt. All these diverse friends could meet and mix in Victor's Concert-room with an easy homely recognition of one another's musical qualities, at times enthusiastic; and their natural divergencies and occasional clashes added a salient tastiness to the group: of whom Nesta could say: 'Mama, was there ever such a collection of dear good souls with such contrary minds?' Her mother had

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the deepest of reasons for loving them, so as not to wish to see the slightest change in their minds, that the accustomed features making her nest of homeliness and real peace might be retained, with the humour of their funny silly antagonisms and the subsequent march in concord; excepting solely as regarded the perverseness of Priscilla Graves in her open contempt of Mr. Pempton's innocent two or three wineglasses. The vegetarian gentleman's politeness forbore to direct attention to the gobbets of meat Priscilla consumed, though he could express disapproval in general terms; but he entertained sentiments as warlike to the lady's habit of 'drinking the blood of animals.' The mockery of it was, that Priscilla liked Mr. Pempton and admired his violoncello-playing, and he was unreserved in eulogy of her person and her pure soprano tones. Nataly was a poetic match-maker. Mr. Peridon was intended for Mademoiselle de Seilles, Nesta's young French governess; a lady of a courtly bearing, with placid speculation in the eyes she cast on a foreign people, and a voluble muteness shadowing at intervals along the line of her closed lips.

The one person among them a little out of tune with most, was Lady Grace Halley. Nataly's provincial gentlewoman's traditions of the manners indicating conduct, reproved unwonted licences assumed by Lady Grace; who, in allusion to Hymen's weaving of a cousinship between the earldom of Southweare and that of Cantor, of which Mr. Sowerby sprang, set her mouth and fan at work to delineate total distinctions, as it were from the egg to the empyrean. Her stature was rather short, all of it conversational, at the eyebrows, the shoulders, the finger-tips, the twisting

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shape; a ballerina's expressiveness; and her tongue dashed half sentences through and among these hieroglyphs, loosely and funnily candid. Anybody might hear that she had gone gambling into the City, and that she had got herself into a mess, and that by great good luck she had come across Victor Radnor, who, with two turns of the wrist, had plucked her out of the mire, the miraculous man! And she had vowed to him, never again to run doing the like without his approval.

The cause of her having done it, was related with the accompaniments; brows twitching, flitting smiles, shrugs, pouts, shifts of posture: she was married to a centaur; out of the saddle a man of wood, 'an excellent man.' For the not colloquial do not commit themselves. But one wants a little animation in a husband. She called on bell-motion of the head to toll forth the utter nightcap negative. He had not any: out of the saddle, he was asleep:—'next door to the Last Trump,' Colney Durance assisted her to describe the soundest of sleep in a husband, after wooing her to unbosom herself. She was awake to his guileful arts, and sailed along with him, hailing his phrases, if he shot a good one; prankishly exposing a flexible nature, that took its holiday thus in a grinding world, among maskers, to the horrification of the prim. So to refresh ourselves, by having publicly a hip-bath in the truth while we shock our hearers enough to be discredited for what we reveal, was a dexterous merry twist, amusing to her; but it was less a cynical malice than her nature that she indulged. 'A woman must have some excitement.' The most innocent appeared to her the Stock Exchange. The

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opinions of husbands who are not summoned to pay are hardly important; they vary.

Colney helped her now and then to step the trifle beyond her stride, but if he was humorous, she forgave; and if together they appalled the decorous, it was great gain. Her supple person, pretty lips, the style she had, gave a pass to the wondrous confidings, which were for masculine ears, whatever the sex. Nataly might share in them, but women did not lead her to expansiveness; or not the women of the contracted class: Miss Graves, Mrs. Cormyn, and others at the Radnor Concerts. She had a special consideration for Mademoiselle de Seilles, owing to her exquisite Freneh, as she said; and she may have liked it, but it was the young Frenchwoman's air of high breeding that won her esteem. Girls were Spring frosts to her. Fronting Nesta, she put on her printed smile, or woodcut of a smile, with its label of indulgence; except when the girl sang. Music she loved. She said it was the saving of poor Dudley. It distinguished him in the group of the noble Evangelical Cantor Family; and it gave him a subject of assured discourse in company; and oddly, it contributed to his comelier air. Flute in hand, his mouth at the blow-stop was relieved of its pained up-draw by the form for puffing; he preserved a gentlemanly high figure in his exercises on the instrument, out of ken of all likeness to the urgent insistency of Victor Radnor's punctuating trunk of the puffing frame at almost every bar—an Apollo brilliancy in energetic pursuit of the nymph of sweet sound. Too methodical one, too fiery the other.

In duets of Hauptmann's, with Nesta at the piano,

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the contrast of dull smoothness and overstressed significance was very noticeable beside the fervent accuracy of her balanced fingering; and as she could also flute, she could criticize; though latterly the flute was boxed away from lips that had devoted themselves wholly to song: song being one of the damsel's present pressing ambitions. She found nothing to correct in Mr. Sowerby, and her father was open to all the censures; but her father could plead vitality, passion. He held his performances cheap after the vehement display; he was a happy listener, whether to the babble of his 'dear old Corelli,' or to the majesty of the rattling heavens and swaying forests of Beethoven.

His air of listening was a thing to see; it had a look of disembodiment; the sparkle conjured up from deeps, and the life in the sparkle, as of a soul at holiday. Eyes had been given this man to spy the pleasures and reveal the joy of his pasture on them: gateways to the sunny within, issues to all the outer Edens. Few of us possess that double significance of the pure sparkle. It captivated Lady Grace. She said a word of it to Fenellan: 'There is a man who can feel rapture!' He had not to follow the line of her sight: she said so on a previous evening, in a similar tone; and for a woman to repeat herself, using the very emphasis, was quaint. She could feel rapture; but her features and limbs were in motion to designate it, between simply and wilfully; she had the instinct to be dimpling, and would not for a moment control it, and delighted in its effectiveness: only when observing that winged sparkle of eyes did an idea of envy, hardly a consciousness, inform her

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of being surpassed; and it might be in the capacity to feel besides the gift to express. Such a reflection relating to a man, will make women mortally sensible that they are the feminine of him.

'His girl has the look,' Fenellan said in answer.

She cast a glance at Nesta, then at Nataly.

And it was true, that the figure of a mother, not pretending to the father's vividness, eclipsed it somewhat in their child. The mother gave richness of tones, hues and voice, and stature likewise, and the thick brown locks, which in her own were threads of gold along the brush from the temples: she gave the girl a certain degree of the composure of manner which Victor could not have bestowed; she gave nothing to clash with his genial temper; she might be supposed to have given various qualities, moral if you like. But vividness was Lady Grace's admirable meteor of the hour: she was unable to perceive, so as to compute, the value of obscurer lights. Under the charm of Nataly's rich contralto during a duet with Priscilla Graves, she gesticulated ecstasies, and uttered them, and genuinely; and still, when reduced to meditations, they would have had no weight, they would hardly have seemed an apology for language, beside Victor's gaze of pleasure in the noble forthroll of the notes.

Nataly heard the invitation of the guests of the evening to Lakelands next day.

Her anxieties were at once running about to gather provisions for the baskets. She spoke of them at night. But Victor had already put the matter into the hands of Madame Callet; and all that could be done, would be done by Armandine, he knew. 'If she can't

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muster enough at home, she 'll be off to her Piccadilly shop by seven A.M. Count on plenty for twice the number.'

Nataly was reposing on the thought that they were her friends, when Victor mentioned his having in the afternoon despatched a note to his relatives, the Duvidney ladies, inviting them to join him at the station to-morrow, for a visit of inspection to the house of his building on his new estate. He startled her. The Duvidney ladies were, to his knowledge, of the order of the fragile minds which hold together by the cement of a common trepidation for the support of things established, and have it not in them to be able to recognize the unsanctioned. Good women, unworldly of the world, they were perforce harder than the world, from being narrower and more timorous.

'But, Victor, you were sure they would refuse!'

He answered: 'They may have gone back to Tunbridge Wells. By the way, they have a society down there I want for Fredi. Sure, do you say, my dear? Perfectly sure. But the accumulation of invitations and refusals in the end softens them, you will see. We shall and must have them for Fredi.'

She was used to the long reaches of his forecasts, his burning activity on a project; she found it idle to speak her thought, that his ingenuity would have been needless in a position dictated by plain prudence, and so much happier for them.

They talked of Mrs. Burman until she had to lift a prayer to be saved from darker thoughts, dreadfully prolific, not to be faced. Part of her prayer was on behalf of Mrs. Burman, for life to be extended to her,

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if the poor lady clung to life—if it was really humane to wish it for her: and heaven would know: heaven had mercy on the afflicted.

Nataly heard the snuffle of hypocrisy in her prayer. She had to cease to pray.

CHAPTER IX

An Inspection of Lakelands

One may not have an intention to flourish, and may be pardoned for a semblance of it, in exclaiming, somewhat royally, as creator and owner of the place: 'There you see Lakelands.'

The conveyances from the railway station drew up on a rise of road fronting an undulation, where our modern English architect's fantasia in crimson brick swept from central gables to flying wings, over pents, crooks, curves, peaks, cowled porches, balconies, recesses, projections, away to a red village of stables and dependent cottages; harmonious in irregularity; and coloured homely with the greensward about it, the pines beside it, the clouds above it. Not many palaces would be reckoned as larger. The folds and swells and stream of the building along the roll of ground, had an appearance of an enormous banner on the wind. Nataly looked. Her next look was at Colney Durance. She sent the expected nods to Victor's carriage. She would have given the whole prospect for the covering solitariness of her chamber. A multitude of clashing sensations, and a throat-thickening hateful to her, compelled her to summon

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so as to force herself to feel a groundless anger, directed against none, against nothing, perfectly crazy, but her only resource for keeping down the great wave surgent at her eyes.

Victor was like a swimmer in morning sea amid the exclamations encircling him. He led through the straight passage of the galleried hall, offering two fair landscapes at front door and at back, down to the lake, Fredi's lake; a good oblong of water, notable in a district not abounding in the commodity. He would have it a feature of the district; and it had been deepened and extended; up rose the springs, many ran the ducts. Fredi's pretty little bath-shed or bower had a space of marble on the three-feet shallow it overhung with a shade of carved woodwork; it had a diving-board for an eight-feet plunge; a punt and small row-boat of elegant build hard by. Green ran the banks about, and a beechwood fringed with birches curtained the Northward length: morning sun and evening had a fair face of water to paint. Saw man ever the like for pleasing a poetical damsel? So was Miss Fredi, the coldest of the party hitherto, and dreaming a preference of 'old places' like Creckholt and Craye Farm, 'captured to be enraptured,' quite according to man's ideal of his beneficence to the sex. She pressed the hand of her young French governess Louise de Seilles. As in everything he did for his girl, Victor pointed boastfully to his forethought of her convenience and her tastes: the pine-panels of the interior, the shelves for her books, pegs to hang her favourite drawings, and the couch-bunk under a window to conceal the summerly recliner while throwing full light on her book; and the hearth-

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square for logs, when she wanted fire: because Fredi bathed in any weather: the oaken towel-coffer; the wood-carvings of doves, tits, fishes; the rod for the flowered silken hangings she was to choose, and have shy odalisque peeps of sunny water from her couch.

'Fredi's Naïad retreat, when she wishes to escape Herr Sträuscher or Signor Ruderi,' said Victor, having his grateful girl warm in an arm; 'and if they head after her into the water, I back her to leave them puffing; she 's a dolphin. That water has three springs and gets all the drainings of the upland round us. I chose the place chiefly on account of it and the pines. I do love pines!'

'But, excellent man! what do you not love?' said Lady Grace, with the timely hit upon the obvious, which rings.

'It saves him from accumulation of tissue,' said Colney.

'What does?' was eagerly asked by the wife of the homœopathic Dr. John Cormyn, a sentimental lady beset with fears of stoutness.

Victor cried: 'Tush; don't listen to Colney, pray.'

But she heard Colney speak of a positive remedy, more immediately effective than an abjuration of potatoes and sugar. She was obliged by her malady to listen, although detesting the irreverent ruthless man, who could direct expanding frames, in a serious tone, to love; love everybody, everything; violently and universally love; and so without intermission pay out the fat created by a rapid assimilation of nutriment. Obeseness is the most sensitive of our ailments: probably as being aware, that its legitimate appeal to pathos is ever smothered in

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its pudding-bed of the grotesque. She was pained, and showed it, and was ashamed of herself for showing it; and that very nearly fetched the tear.

'Our host is an instance in proof,' Colney said. He waved hand at the house. His meaning was hidden; evidently he wanted victims. Sight of Lakelands had gripped him with the fell satiric itch; and it is a passion to sting and tear, on rational grounds. His face meanwhile, which had points of the handsome, signified a smile asleep, as if beneath a cloth. Only those who knew him well were aware of the claw-like alertness under the droop of eyelids.

Admiration was the common note, in the various keys. The station selected for the South-eastward aspect of the dark-red gabled pile on its white shell-terrace, backed by a plantation of tall pines, a mounded and full-plumed company, above the left wing, was admired, in files and in volleys. Marvellous, effectively miraculous, was the tale of the vow to have the great edifice finished within one year: and the strike of workmen, and the friendly colloquy with them, the good reasoning, the unanimous return to duty; and the doubling, the trebling of the number of them; and the most glorious of sights—the grand old English working with a will! as Englishmen do when they come at last to heat; and they conquer, there is then nothing that they cannot conquer. So the conqueror said.—And admirable were the conservatories running three long lines, one from the drawing-room, to a central dome for tropical growths. And the parterres were admired; also the newly-planted Irish junipers bounding the West-

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walk; and the three tiers of stately descent from the three green terrace banks to the grassy slopes over the lake. Again the lake was admired, the house admired. Admiration was evoked for great orchid-houses 'over yonder,' soon to be set up.

Off we go to the kitchen-garden. There the admiration is genial, practical. We admire the extent of the beds marked out for asparagus, and the French disposition of the planting at wide intervals; and the French system of training peach, pear, and plum trees on the walls to win length and catch sun, we much admire. We admire the gardener. We are induced temporarily to admire the French people. They are sagacious in fruit-gardens. They have not the English Constitution, you think rightly; but in fruit-gardens they grow for fruit, and not, as Victor quotes a friend, for wood, which the valiant English achieve. We hear and we see examples of sagacity; and we are further brought round to the old confession, that we cannot cook; Colney Durance has us there; we have not studied herbs and savours; and so we are shocked backward step by step until we retreat precipitately into the nooks where waxen tapers, carefully tended by writers on the Press, light up mysterious images of our national selves for admiration. Something surely we do, or we should not be where we are. But what is it we do (excepting cricket, of course) which others cannot do? Colney asks; and he excludes cricket and football.

An acutely satiric man in an English circle, that does not resort to the fist for a reply to him, may almost satiate the excessive fury roused in his mind by an illogical people of a provocative prosperity,

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mainly tongueless or of leaden tongue above the pressure of their necessities, as he takes them to be. They give him so many opportunities. They are angry and helpless as the log hissing to the saw. Their instinct to make use of the downright in retort, restrained as it is by a buttoned coat of civilization, is amusing, inviting. Colney Durance allured them to the quag's edge and plunged them in it, to writhe patriotically; and although it may be said, that they felt their situation less than did he the venom they sprang in his blood, he was cruel; he caused discomfort. But these good friends about him stood for the country, an illogical country; and as he could not well attack his host Victor Radnor, an irrational man, he selected the abstract entity for the discharge of his honest spite.

The irrational friend was deeper at the source of his irritation than the illogical old motherland. This house of Lakelands, the senselessness of his friend in building it and designing to live in it, after experiences of an incapacity to stand in a serene contention with the world he challenged, excited Colney's wasp. He was punished, half way to frenzy behind his placable demeanour, by having Dr. Schlesien for chorus. And here again, it was the unbefitting, not the person, which stirred his wrath. A German on English soil should remember the dues of a guest. At the same time, Colney said things to snare the acclamation of an observant gentleman of that race, who is no longer in his first enthusiasm for English beef and the complexion of the women. 'Ah, ya, it is true, what you say: "The English grow as fast as odders, but they *grow to horns instead of brains.*" They

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are Bull. Quaat true.' He bellowed on a laugh the last half of the quotation.

Colney marked him. His encounters with Fenellan were enlivening engagements and left no malice; only a regret, when the fencing passed his guard, that Fenellan should prefer to flash for the minute. He would have met a pert defender of England, in the person of Miss Priscilla Graves, if she had not been occupied with observation of the bearing of Lady Grace Halley toward Mr. Victor Radnor; which displeased her on behalf of Mrs. Victor; she was besides hostile by race and class to an aristocratic assumption of licence. Sparing Colney, she with some scorn condemned Mr. Pempton for allowing his country to be ridiculed without a word. Mr. Pempton believed that the Vegetarian movement was more progressive in England that in other lands, but he was at the disadvantage with the fair Priscilla, that eulogy of his compatriots on this account would win her coldest approval. 'Satire was never an argument,' he said, too evasively.

The Rev. Septimus Barmby received the meed of her smile, for saying in his many-fathom bass, with an eye on Victor: 'At least we may boast of breeding men, who are leaders of men.'

The announcement of luncheon, by Victor's butler Arlington, opportunely followed and freighted the remark with a happy recognition of that which comes to us from the hands of conquerors. Dr. Schlesien himself, no antagonist to England, but like Colney Durance, a critic, speculated in view of the spread of picnic provision beneath the great glass dome, as to whether it might be, that these English were on

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another start out of the dust in vigorous commercial enterprise, under leadership of one of their chance masterly minds—merchant, in this instance: and he debated within, whether Genius, occasionally developed in a surprising superior manner by these haphazard English, may not sometimes wrest the prize from Method; albeit we count for the long run, that Method has assurance of success, however late in the race to set forth.

Luncheon was a merry meal, with Victor and Nataly for host and hostess; Fenellan, Colney Durance, and Lady Grace Halley for the talkers. A gusty bosom of sleet overhung the dome, rattled on it, and rolling Westward, became a radiant mountain-land, partly worthy of Victor's phrase: 'A range of Swiss Alps in air.'

'With periwigs Louis Quatorze for peaks,' Colney added.

And Fenellan improved on him: 'Or a magnified Bench of Judges at the trial of your cærulean Phryne.'

The strip of white cloud flew on a whirl from the blue, to confirm it.

But Victor and Lady Grace rejected any play of conceits upon nature. Violent and horrid interventions of the counterfeit, such mad similes appeared to them, when pure coin was offered. They loathed the Rev. Septimus Barmby for proclaiming, that he had seen 'Chapters of Hebrew History in the grouping of clouds.'

His gaze was any one of the Chapters upon Nesta. The clerical gentleman's voice was of a depth to claim for it the profoundest which can be thought or uttered; and Nesta's tender youth had taken so strong an impression of sacredness from what

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Fenellan called 'his chafer tones,' that her looks were often given him in gratitude, for the mere sound. Nataly also had her sense of safety in acquiescing to such a voice coming from such a garb. Consequently, whenever Fenellan and Colney were at him, drawing him this way and that for utterances cathedral in sentiment and sonorousness, these ladies shed protecting beams; insomuch that he was inspired to the agreeable conceptions whereof frequently rash projects are an issue.

Touching the neighbours of Lakelands, they were principally enriched merchants, it appeared; a snippet or two of the fringe of aristocracy lay here and there among them; and one racy-of-the-soil old son of Thanes, having the manners proper to last century's yeoman. Mr. Pempton knew something of this quaint Squire of Hefferstone, Beaves Urmsing by name; a ruddy man, right heartily Saxon; a still glowing brand amid the ashes of the Heptarchy hearthstone; who had a song, *The Marigolds*, which he would troll out for you anywhere, on any occasion. To have so near to the metropolis one from the centre of the venerable rotundity of the country, was rare. Victor exclaimed 'Come!' in ravishment over the picturesqueness of a neighbour carrying imagination away to the founts of England; and his look at Nataly proposed. Her countenance was inapprehensive. He perceived resistance, and said: 'I have met two or three of them in the train: agreeable men: Gladding, the banker; a General Fanning; that man Blathenoy, great bill-broker. But the fact is, close on London, we're independent of neighbours; we mean to be. Lakelands and London practically join.'

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'The mother city becoming the suburb,' murmured Colney, in report of the union.

'You must expect to be invaded, sir,' said Mr. Sowerby; and Victor shrugged: 'We are pretty safe.'

'The lock of a door seems a potent security until some one outside is heard fingering the handle nigh midnight,' Fenellan threw out his airy nothing of a remark.

It struck on Nataly's heart. 'So you will not let us be lonely here,' she said to her guests.

The Rev. Septimus Barmby was mouthpiece for congregations. Sound of a subterranean roar, with a blast at the orifice, informed her of their 'very deep happiness in the privilege.'

He comforted her. Nesta smiled on him thankfully.

'Don't imagine, Mrs. Victor, that you can be shut off from neighbours, in a house like this; and they have a claim,' said Lady Grace, quitting the table.

Fenellan and Colney thought so:

'Like mice at a cupboard.'

'Beetles in a kitchen.'

'No, no—no, no!' Victor shook head, pitiful over the good people likened to things unclean, and royally upraising them: in doing which, he scattered to vapour the leaden incubi they had been upon his flatter moods of late. 'No, but it's a rapture to breathe the air here!' His lifted chest and nostrils were for the encouragement of Nataly to soar beside him.

She summoned her smile and nodded.

He spoke aside to Lady Grace: 'The dear soul wants time to compose herself after a grand surprise.'

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She replied: 'I think I could soon be reconciled. How much land?'

'In treaty for some hundred and eighty or ninety acres . . . in all at present three hundred and seventy, including plantations, lake, outhouses.'

'Large enough; land paying as it does—that is, not paying. We shall be having to gamble in the City systematically for subsistence.'

'You will not so much as jest on the subject.'

Coming from such a man, that was clear sky thunder. The lady played it off in a shadowy pout and shrug while taking a stamp of his masterfulness, not so volatile.

She said to Nataly: 'Our place in Worcestershire is about half the size, if as much. Large enough when we're not crowded out with gout and can open to no one. Some day you will visit us, I hope.'

'You we count on here, Lady Grace.'

It was an over-accentuated response; unusual with this well-bred woman; and a bit of speech that does not flow, causes us to speculate. The lady resumed: 'I value the favour. We're in a horsey-doggy-foxy circle down there. We want enlivening. If we had your set of musicians and talkers!'

Nataly smiled in vacuous kindness, at a loss for the retort of a compliment to a person she measured. Lady Grace also was an amiable hostile reviewer. Each could see, to have cited in the other, defects common to the lower species of the race, admitting a superior personal quality or two; which might be pleaded in extenuation; and if the apology proved too effective, could be dispersed by insistence upon it, under an implied appeal to benevolence. When we

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have not a liking for the creature whom we have no plain cause to dislike, we are minutely just.

During the admiratory stroll along the ground-floor rooms, Colney Durance found himself beside Dr. Schlesien; the latter smoking, striding, emphasizing, but bearable, as the one of the party who was not perpetually at the gape in laudation. Colney was heard to say: 'No doubt: the German is the race the least mixed in Europe: it might challenge aboriginals for that. Oddly, it has invented the Cyclopædia for knowledge, the sausage for nutrition! How would you explain it?'

Dr. Schlesien replied with an Atlas shrug under fleabite to the insensately infantile interrogation.

He in turn was presently heard.

'But, my good sir! you quote me your English Latin. I must beg of you you write it down. It is orally incomprehensible to Continentals.'

'We are Islanders!' Colney shrugged in languishment.

'Oh, you do great things . . .' Dr. Schlesien rejoined in kindness, making his voice a musical intimation of the smallness of the things.

'We build great houses, to employ our bricks.'

'No, Colney, to live in,' said Victor.

'Scarcely long enough to warm them.'

'What do you . . . fiddle!'

'They are not Hohenzollerns!'

'It is true,' Dr. Schlesien called. 'No, but you learn discipline; you build. I say wid you, not Hohenzollerns you build! But you shall look above: Eyes up. *Ire necesse est.* Good, but mount; you come to something. Have ideas.'

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'Good, but when do we reach your level?'

'Sir, I do not say more than that we do not want instruction from foreigners.'

'Pupil to pædagogue indeed. You have the wreath in Music, in Jurisprudence, Chemistry, Scholarship, Beer, Arms, Manners.'

Dr. Schlesien puffed a tempest of tobacco and strode.

'He is chiselling for wit in the Teutonic block,' Colney said, falling back to Fenellan.

Fenellan observed: 'You might have credited him with the finished sculpture.'

'They're ahead of us in sticking at the charge of wit.'

'They've a widening of their swallow since Versailles.'

'*Manners?*'

'Well, that's a tight cravat for the Teutonic thrapple! But he's off by himself to loosen it.'

Victor came on the couple testily. 'What are you two concocting! I say, do keep the peace, please. An excellent good fellow; better up in politics than any man I know; understands music; means well, you can see. You two hate a man at all serious. And he doesn't bore with his knowledge. A scholar too.'

'If he'll bring us the atmosphere of the groves of Academe, he may swing his ferule pickled in himself, and welcome,' said Fenellan.

'Yes!' Victor nodded at a recognized antagonism in Fenellan; 'but Colney's always lifting the Germans high above us.'

'It's to exercise his muscles.'

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Victor headed to the other apartments, thinking that the Rev. Septimus and young Sowerby, Old England herself, were spared by the diversion of these light skirmishing shots from their accustomed victims to the masculine people of our time. His friends would want a drilling to be of aid to him in his campaign to come. For it was one, and a great one. He remembered his complete perception of the plan, all the elements of it, the forward whirling of it, just before the fall on London Bridge. The greatness of his enterprise laid such hold of him that the smallest of obstacles had a villanous aspect; and when, as anticipated, Colney and Fenellan were sultry flies for whomsoever they could fret, he was blind to the reading of absurdities which caused Fredi's eyes to stream and Lady Grace beside him to stand awhile and laugh out her fit. Young Sowerby appeared forgiving enough — he was a perfect gentleman: but Fredi's appalling sense of fun must try him hard. And those young fellows are often more wounded by a girl's thoughtless laughter than by a man's contempt. Nataly should have protected him. Her face had the air of a smiling general satisfaction; sign of a pleasure below the mark required; sign too of a sleepy partner for a battle. Even in the wonderful kitchen, arched and pillared (where the explanation came to Nesta of Madame Callet's frequent leave of absence of late, when an inferior dinner troubled her father in no degree), even there his Nataly listened to the transports of the guests with benign indulgence.

'Mama!' said Nesta, ready to be entranced by kitchens in her bubbling animation: she meant the

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recalling of instances of the conspirator her father had been.

'You none of you guessed Armandine's business!' Victor cried, in a glee that pushed to make the utmost of this matter and count against chagrin. 'She was off to Paris; went to test the last inventions:—French brains are always alert:—and in fact, those kitchen-ranges, gas and coal, and the apparatus for warming plates and dishes, the whole of the battery is on the model of the Duc d'Ariane's—finest in Europe. Well,' he agreed with Colney, 'to say France is enough.'

Mr. Pempton spoke to Miss Graves of the task for a woman to conduct a command so extensive. And, as when an inoffensive wayfarer has chanced to set foot near a wasp's nest, out on him came woman and her champions, the worthy and the sham, like a blast of powder.

Victor ejaculated: 'Armandine!' Whoever doubted her capacity, knew not Armandine; or not knowing Armandine, knew not the capacity in women.

With that utterance of her name, he saw the orangey spot on London Bridge, and the sinking Tower and masts and funnels, and the rising of them, on his return to his legs; he recollected, that at the very edge of the fall he had Armandine strongly in his mind. She was to do her part: Fenellan and Colney on the surface, she below: and hospitality was to do its part, and music was impressed—the innocent Concerts; his wealth, all his inventiveness were to serve;—and merely to attract and win the tastes of people, for a social support to Lakelands! Merely that? Much more:—if Nataly's coldness to

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the place would but allow him to form an estimate of how much. At the same time, being in the grasp of his present disappointment, he perceived a meanness in the result, that was astonishing and afflicting. He had not ever previously felt imagination starving at the vision of success. Victor had yet to learn, that the man with a material object in aim, is the man of his object; and the nearer to his mark, often the farther is he from a sober self; he is more the arrow of his bow than bow to his arrow. This we pay for scheming: and success is costly; we find we have pledged the better half of ourselves to clutch it; not to be redeemed with the whole handful of our prize! He was, however, learning after his leaping fashion. Nataly's defective sympathy made him look at things through the feelings she depressed. A shadow of his missed Idea on London Bridge seemed to cross him from the close flapping of a wing within reach. He could say only, that it would, if caught, have been an answer to the thought disturbing him.

Nataly drew Colney Durance with her eyes to step beside her, on the descent to the terrace. Little Skepsey hove in sight, coming swift as the point of an outrigger over the flood.

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Skepsey in Motion

The bearer of his master's mid-day letters from London shot beyond Nataly as soon as seen, with an apparent snap of his body in passing. He steamed to the end

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of the terrace and delivered the packet, returning at the same rate of speed, to do proper homage to the lady he so much respected. He had left the railway-station on foot instead of taking a fly, because of a calculation that he would save three minutes; which he had not lost for having to come through the rain-cloud. 'Perhaps the contrary,' Skepsey said: it might be judged to have accelerated his course: and his hat dripped, and his coat shone, and he soaped his hands, cheerful as an ouzel-cock when the sun is out again.

'Many cracked crowns lately, in the Manly Art?' Colney inquired of him. And Skepsey answered with precision of statement: 'Crowns, no, sir; the nose, it may happen; but it cannot be said to be the rule.'

'You are of opinion, that the practice of Scientific Pugilism offers us compensation for the broken bridge of a nose?'

'In an increase of manly self-esteem: I do, sir, yes.'

Skepsey was shy of this gentleman's bite; and he fancied his defence had been correct. Perceiving a crumple of the lips of Mr. Durance, he took the attitude of a watchful dubiety.

'But, my goodness, you are wet through!' cried Nataly, reproaching herself for the tardy compassion; and Nesta ran up to them and heaped a thousand pities on her 'poor dear Skip,' and drove him in beneath the glass-dome to the fragments of picnic, and poured champagne for him, 'lest his wife should have to doctor him for a cold,' and poured afresh, when he had obeyed her: 'for the toasting of Lakelands, dear Skepsey!' impossible to resist: so he drank, and blinked; and was then told, that before using his

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knife and fork he must betake himself to some fire of shavings and chips, where coffee was being made, for the purpose of drying his clothes. But this he would not hear of: he was pledged to business, to convey his master's letters, and he might have to catch a train by the last quarter-minute, unless it was behind the time-tables; he must hold himself ready to start. Entreated, adjured, commanded, Skepsey commiseratingly observed to Colney Durance, 'The ladies do not understand, sir!' For Turk of Constantinople had never a more haremed opinion of the unfitness of women in the brave world of action. The persistence of these ladies endeavouring to obstruct him in the course of his duty, must have succeeded save that for one word of theirs he had two, and twice the promptitude of motion. He explained to them, as to good children, that the loss of five minutes might be the loss of a Post, the loss of thousands of pounds, the loss of the character of a Firm; and he was away to the terrace. Nesta headed him and waved him back. She and her mother rebuked him: they called him unreasonable; wherein they resembled the chief example of the sex to him, in a wife he had at home, who levelled that charge against her husband when most she needed discipline:—the woman laid hand on the very word legitimately his own for the justification of his process with her.

'But, Skips! if you are ill and we have to nurse you!' said Nesta.

She forgot the hospital, he told her cordially, and laughed at the notion of a ducking producing a cold or a cold a fever, or anything consumption, with him. So the ladies had to keep down their anxious minds

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and allow him to stand in wet clothing to eat his cold pie and salad.

Miss Priscilla Graves entering to them, became a witness that they were seductresses for inducing him to drink wine—and a sparkling wine.

'It is to warm him,' they pleaded, and she said: 'He must be warm from his walk'; and they said: 'But he is wet'; and said she, without a show of feeling: 'Warm water, then'; and Skepsey writhed, as if in the grasp of anatomists, at being the subject of female contention or humane consideration. Miss Graves caught signs of the possible proselyte in him; she remarked encouragingly: 'I am sure he does not like it; he still has a natural taste.'

She distressed his native politeness, for the glass was in his hand, and he was fully aware of her high-principled aversion; and he profoundly bowed to principles, believing his England to be pillared on them; and the lady looked like one who bore the standard of a principle; and if we slap and pinch and starve our appetites, the idea of a principle seems entering us to support. Subscribing to a principle, our energies are refreshed; we have a faith in the country that was not with us before the act; and of a real well-founded faith come the glowing thoughts which we have at times: thoughts of England heading the nations; when the smell of an English lane under showers challenges Eden, and the threading of a London crowd tunes discords to the swell of a cathedral organ. It may be, that by the renunciation of any description of alcohol, a man will stand clearer-headed to serve his country. He may expect to have a clearer memory, for certain: he will not be asking himself, unable to

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decide, whether his master named a *Mr. Journeyman* or a *Mr. Jarniman*, as the person he declined to receive. Either of the two is repulsed upon his application, owing to the guilty similarity of sounds: but what we are to think of is, our own sad state of inefficiency in failing to remember; which accuses our physical condition, therefore our habits.—Thus the little man debated, scarcely requiring more than to hear the right word, to be a convert and make him a garland of the proselyte's fetters.

Destructively for the cause she advocated, Miss Priscilla gestured the putting forth of an abjuring hand, with the recommendation to him, so to put aside temptation that instant; and she signified in a very ugly jerk of her features, the vilely filthy stuff Morality thought it, however pleasing it might be to a palate corrupted by indulgence of the sensual appetites.

But the glass had been handed to him by the lady he respected, who looked angelical in offering it, divinely other than ugly; and to her he could not be discourteous; not even to pay his homage to the representative of a principle. He bowed to Miss Graves, and drank, and rushed forth; hearing shouts behind him.

His master had a packet of papers ready, easy for the pocket.

'By the way, Skepsey,' he said, 'if a man named Jarniman should call at the office, I will see him.'

Skepsey's grey eyes came out.

—Or was it *Journeyman*, that his master would not see; and *Jarniman* that he would?

His habit of obedience, pride of apprehension, and

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the time to catch the train, forbade inquiry. Besides he knew of himself of old, that his puzzles were best unriddled running.

The quick of pace are soon in the quick of thoughts.

Jarniman, then, was a man whom his master, not wanting to see, one day, and wanting to see, on another day, might wish to conciliate: a case of policy. Let Jarniman go. Journeyman, on the other hand, was nobody at all, a ghost of the fancy. Yet this Journeyman was as important an individual, he was a dread reality; more important to Skepsey in the light of patriot: and only in that light was he permitted of a scrupulous conscience and modest mind to think upon himself when the immediate subject was his master's interests. For this Journeyman had not an excuse for existence in Mr. Radnor's pronunciation: he was born of the buzz of a troubled ear, coming of a disordered brain, consequent necessarily upon a disorderly stomach, that might protest a degree of comparative innocence, but would be shamed utterly under inspection of the eye of a lady of principle.

What, then, was the value to his country of a servant who could not accurately recollect his master's words! Miss Graves within him asked the rapid little man, whether indeed his ideas were his own after draughts of champagne.

The ideas, excited to an urgent animation by his racing trot, were a quiverful in flight over an England terrible to the foe and dancing on the green. Right so: but would we keep-up the dance, we must be red iron to touch: and the fighter for conquering is the

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one who can last and has the open brain;—and there you have a point against alcohol. Yes, and Miss Graves, if she would press it, with her natural face, could be pleasant and persuasive: and she ought to be told she ought to marry, for the good of the country. Women taking liquor:—Skepsey had a vision of his wife with rheumy peepers and miauly mouth, as he had once beheld the creature:—Oh! they need discipline: not such would we have for the mothers of our English young. Decidedly the women of principle are bound to enter wedlock; they should be bound by law. Whereas, in the opposing case—the binding of the unprincipled to a celibate state—such a law would have saved Skepsey from the necessitated commission of deeds of discipline with one of the female sex, and have rescued his progeny from a likeness to the corn-stalk reverting to weed. He had but a son for England's defence; and the frame of his boy might be set quaking by a thump on the wind of a drum; the courage of William Barlow Skepsey would not stand against a sheep; it would wind-up hares to have a run at him out in the field. Offspring of a woman of principle! . . . but there is no rubbing out in life: why dream of it? Only that one would not have one's country the loser!

Dwell a moment on the reverse:—and first remember the lesson of the Captivity of the Jews and the outcry of their backsliding and repentance:—see a nation of the honourably begotten; muscular men disdaining the luxuries they will occasionally condescend to taste, like some tribe in Greece; boxers, rowers, runners, climbers; braced, indomitable; magnanimous, as only the strong can be; an army at

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word, winning at a stroke the double battle of the hand and the heart: men who can walk the paths through the garden of the pleasures. They receive fitting mates, of a build to promise or aid in ensuring depth of chest and long reach of arm for their progeny.

Down goes the world before them.

And we see how much would be due for this to a corps of ladies like Miss Graves, not allowed to remain too long on the stalk of spinsterhood. Her age might count twenty-eight: too long! She should be taught that men can, though truly ordinary women cannot, walk these orderly paths through the garden. An admission to women, hinting restrictions, on a ticket marked '*in moderation*' (meaning, that they may pluck a flower or fruit along the pathway border to which they are confined), speedily, alas, exhibits them at a mad scramble across the pleasure-beds. They know not moderation. Neither for their own sakes nor for the sakes of Posterity will they hold from excess, when they are not pledged to shun it. The reason is, that their minds cannot conceive the abstract, as men do.

But there are grounds for supposing that the example before them of a sex exercising self-control in freedom, would induce women to pledge themselves to a similar abnegation, until they gain some sense of touch upon the impalpable duty to the generations coming after us:—thanks to the voluntary example we set them.

The stupendous task, which had hitherto baffled Skepsey in the course of conversational remonstrances with his wife;—that of getting the Idea of

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Posterity into the understanding of its principal agent, might then be mastered.

Therefore clearly men have to begin the salutary movement: it manifestly devolves upon them. Let them at once take to rigorous physical training. Women under compulsion, as vessels: men in their magnanimity, patriotically, voluntarily.

Miss Graves must have had an intimation for him; he guessed it; and it plunged him into a conflict with her, that did not suffer him to escape without ruefully feeling the feebleness of his vocabulary: and consequently he made a reluctant appeal to figures, and it hung upon the bolder exhibition of lists and tables as to whether he was beaten; and if beaten, he was morally her captive; and this being the case, nothing could be more repulsive to Skepsey; seeing that he, unable of his nature passively or partially to undertake a line of conduct, beheld himself wearing a detestable 'ribbon,' for sign of an oath quite needlessly sworn (simply to satisfy the lady overcoming him with nimbler tongue), and blocking the streets, marching in bands beneath banners, howling hymns.

Statistics, upon which his master and friends, after exchanging opinions in argument, always fell back, frightened him. As long as they had no opponents of their own kind, they swept the field, they were intelligible, as the word 'principle' had become. But the appearance of one body of Statistics invariably brought up another; and the strokes and counter-strokes were like a play of quarter-staff on the sconce, to knock all comprehension out of Skepsey. Otherwise he would not unwillingly have inquired to-morrow into the Statistics of the controversy between

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the waters of the wells and of the casks, prepared to walk over to the victorious, however objectionable that proceeding. He hoped to question his master some day: except that his master would very naturally have a tendency to sum-up in favour of wine—good wine, in moderation; just as Miss Graves for the cup of tea—not so thoughtfully stipulating that it should be good and not too copious. Statistics are according to their conjurors; they are not independent bodies, with native colours; they needs must be painted by the different hands they pass through, and they may be multiplied; a nought or so counts for nothing with the teller. Skepsey saw that. Yet they can overcome: even as fictitious battalions, they can overcome. He shrank from the results of a ciphering match having him for object, and was ashamed of feeling to Statistics as women to giants; nevertheless he acknowledged that the badge was upon him, if Miss Graves should beat her master in her array of figures, to insist on his wearing it, as she would, she certainly would. And against his internal conviction perhaps; with the knowledge that the figures were an unfortified display, and his oath of bondage an unmanly servility, the silliest of ceremonies! He was shockingly feminine to Statistics.

Mr. Durance despised them: he called them, arguing against Mr. Radnor, 'those emotional things,' not comprehensibly to Skepsey. But Mr. Durance, a very clever gentleman, could not be right in everything. He made strange remarks upon his country. Dr. Yatt attributed them to the state of his digestion.

And Mr. Fenellan had said of Mr. Durance that, as 'a barrister wanting briefs, the speech in him

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had been bottled too long and was an over-ripe wine dripping sour drops through the rotten cork.' Mr. Fenellan said it laughing, he meant no harm. Skepsey was sure he had the words. He heard no more than other people hear; he remembered whole sentences, and many: on one of his runs, this active little machine, quickened by motion to fire, revived the audible of years back; whatever suited his turn of mind at the moment rushed to the rapid wheels within him. His master's business and friends, his country's welfare and advancement, these, with records, items, anticipations, of the manlier sports to decorate, were his current themes; all being chopped and tossed and mixed in salad accordance by his fervour of velocity. And if you would like a further definition of Genius, think of it as a form of swiftness. It is the lively young great-grandson, in the brain, of the travelling force which mathematicians put to paper, in a row of astounding ciphers, for the motion of earth through space; to the generating of heat, whereof is multiplication, whereof deposited matter, and so your chaos, your half-lighted labyrinth, your ceaseless pressure to evolvement; and then Light, and so Creation, order, the work of Genius. What do you say?

Without having a great brain, the measure of it possessed by Skepsey was alive under strong illumination. In his heart, while doing penance for his presumptuousness, he believed that he could lead regiments of men. He was not the army's General, he was the General's Lieutenant, now and then venturing to suggest a piece of counsel to his Chief. On his own particular drilled regiments, his Chief

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may rely; and on his knowledge of the country of the campaign, roads, morasses, masking hills, dividing rivers. He had mapped for himself mentally the battles of conquerors in his favourite historic reading; and he understood the value of a plan, and the danger of sticking to it, and the advantage of a big army for flanking; and he manœuvred a small one cunningly to make it a bolt at the telling instant. Dartrey Fenellan had explained to him Frederick's oblique attack, Napoleon's employment of the artillery arm preparatory to the hurling of the cataract on the spot of weakness, Wellington's parallel march with Marmont up to the hour of the decisive cut through the latter at Salamanca; and Skepsey treated his enemy to the like, deferentially reporting the engagement to a Chief whom his modesty kept in eminence, for the receiving of the principal honours. As to his men, of all classes and sorts, they are so supple with training that they sustain a defeat like the sturdy pugilist a knock off his legs, and up smiling a minute after—one of the truly beautiful sights on this earth! They go at the double half a day, never sounding a single pair of bellows among them. They have their appetites in full control, to eat when they can, or cheerfully fast. They have healthy frames, you see; and as the healthy frame is not artificially heated, it ensues that, under any title you like, they profess the principles—into the bog we go, we have got round to it!—the principles of those horrible marching and chanting people!

Then, must our England, to be redoubtable to the enemy, be a detestable country for habitation?

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Here was a knot.

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Skepsey's head dropped lower, he went as a ram. The sayings of Mr. Durance about his dear England: —that 'her remainder of life is in the activity of her diseases':—that 'she has so fed upon Pap of Compromise as to be unable any longer to conceive a muscular resolution':—that 'she is animated only as the carcase to the blow-fly'; and so forth:—charged on him during his wrestle with his problem. And the gentleman had said, had permitted himself to say, that our England's recent history was a provincial apothecary's exhibition of the battle of bane and antidote. Mr. Durance could hardly mean it. But how could one answer him when he spoke of the torpor of the people, and of the succeeding Governments as a change of lacqueys—or the purse-string's lacqueys? He said, that Old England has taken to the arm-chair for good, and thinks it her whole business to pronounce opinions and listen to herself; and that, in the face of an armed Europe, this great nation is living on sufferance. Oh!

Skepsey had uttered the repudiating exclamation.

'Feel quite up to it?' he was asked by his neighbour.

The mover of armed hosts for the defence of the country sat in a third-class carriage of the train, approaching the first of the stations on the way to town. He was instantly up to the level of an external world, and fell into give and take with a burly broad communicative man; located in London, but born in the North, in view of Durham cathedral, as he thanked his Lord; who was of the order of pork-butcher; which succulent calling had carried him down to near upon

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the borders of Surrey and Sussex, some miles beyond the new big house of a Mister whose name he had forgotten, though he had heard it mentioned by an acquaintance interested in the gentleman's doings. But his object was to have a look at a rare breed of swine, worth the journey; that didn't run to fat so much as to flavour, had longer legs, sharp snouts to plump their hams; over from Spain, it seemed; and the gentleman owning them was for selling them, finding them wild past correction. But the acquaintance mentioned, who was down to visit t' other gentleman's big new edifice in workmen's hands, had a mother, who had been cook to a family, and was now widow of a cook's shop; ham, beef, and sausages, prime pies to order; and a good specimen herself; and if ever her son saw *her* spirit at his bedside, there wouldn't be room for much else in that chamber—supposing us to keep our shapes. But he was the right sort of son, anxious to push his mother's shop where he saw a chance, and do it cheap; and those foreign pigs, after a disappointment to their importer, might be had pretty cheap, and were accounted tasty.

Skepsey's main thought was upon war: the man had discoursed of pigs.

He informed the man of his having heard from a scholar, that pigs had been the cause of more bloody battles than any other animal.

How so? the pork-butcher asked, and said he was not much of a scholar, and pigs might be provoking, but he had not heard they were a cause of strife between man and man. For possession of them, Skepsey explained. Oh! possession! Why, we've heard of bloody battles for the possession of women! Men

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will fight for almost anything they care to get or call their own, the pork-butcher said; and he praised Old England for avoiding war. Skepsey nodded. How if war is forced on us?—Then we fight.—Suppose we are not prepared?—We soon get that up.—Skepsey requested him to state the degree of resistance he might think he could bring against a pair of skilful fists, in a place out of hearing of the police.

'Say, *you!*' said the pork-butcher, and sharply smiled, for he was a man of size.

'I would give you two minutes,' rejoined Skepsey, eyeing him intently and kindly: insomuch that it could be seen he was not in the conundrum vein.

'Rather short allowance, eh, master?' said the bigger man. 'Feel here'; he straightened out his arm and doubled it, raising a proud bridge of muscle.

Skepsey performed the national homage to muscle. 'Twice that, would not help without the science,' he remarked, and let his arm be gripped in turn.

The pork-butcher's throat sounded, as it were, commas and colons, punctuations in his reflections, while he tightened fingers along the iron lump. 'Stringy. You're a wiry one, no mistake.' It was encomium. With the ingrained contempt of size for a smallness that has not yet taught it the prostrating lesson, he said: 'Weight tells.'

'In a wrestle,' Skepsey admitted. 'Allow me to say, you would not touch me.'

'And how do you know I'm not a trifle handy with the maulers myself?'

'You will pardon me for saying, it would be worse for you if you were.'

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CHAPTER X
Skepsey in Motion

The pork-butcher was flung backward. 'Are you a Professor, may I inquire?'

Skepsey rejected the title. 'I can engage to teach young men, upon a proper observance of first principles.'

'They be hanged!' cried the ruffled pork-butcher. 'Our best men never got it out of books. Now, you tell me—you've got a spiflicating style of talk about you:—no brag, you tell me—course, the best man wins, if you mean that:—now, if I was one of 'em, and I fetches you a bit of a flick, how then? Would you be ready to step out with a real Professor?'

'I should claim a fair field,' was the answer, made in modesty.

'And you'd expect to whop me with they there principles of yours?'

'I should expect to.'

'Bang me!' was roared. After a stare at the mild little figure with the fitfully dead-levelled large grey eyes in front of him, the pork-butcher resumed: 'Take you for the man you say you be, you're just the man for my friend Jarn and me. He dearly loves to see a set-to, self the same. What prettier? And if you would be so obliging some day as to favour us with a display, we'd head a cap conformably, whether you'd the best of it, according to your expectations, or t'other way:—For there never was shame in a jolly good licking! as the song says: that is, *if* you take it and make it appear *jolly good*.—And find you an opponent meet and fit, never doubt. Ever had the worse of an encounter, sir?'

'Often, sir.'

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'Well, that's good. And it didn't destroy your confidence?'

'Added to it, I hope.'

At this point, it became a crying necessity for Skepsey to escape from an area of boastfulness, into which he had fallen inadvertently; and he hastened to apologize 'for his personal reference,' that was intended for an illustration of our country caught unawares by a highly trained picked soldiery, inferior in numbers to the patriotic levies, but sharp at the edge and knowing how to strike. Measure the axe, measure the tree; and which goes down first?

'Invasion, is it?—and you mean, we're not to hit back?' the pork-butcher bellowed, and presently secured a murmured approbation from an audience of three, that had begun to comprehend the dialogue, and strengthened him in a manner to teach Skepsey the foolishness of ever urging analogies of too extended a circle to close sharply on the mark. He had no longer a chance, he was overborne, identified with the fated invader, rolled away into the chops of the Channel, to be swallowed up entire, and not a rag left of him, but John Bull tucking up his shirt-sleeves on the shingle beach, ready for a second or a third; crying to them to come on.

Warmed by his Bullish victory, and friendly to the vanquished, the pork-butcher told Skepsey he should like to see more of him, and introduced himself on a card: Benjamin Shaplow, not far from the Bank.

They parted at the Terminus, where three shrieks of an engine, sounding like merry messages of the damned to their congeners in the anticipatory stench of the cab-droppings above, disconnected sane hearing;

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CHAPTER X Skepsey in Motion

perverted it, no doubt. Or else it was the stamp of a particular name on his mind, which impressed Skepsey, as he bored down the street and across the bridge, to fancy in recollection, that Mr. Shaplow, when reiterating the wish for self and friend to witness a display of his cunning with the fists, had spoken the name of Jarniman. An unusual name: yet more than one Jarniman might well exist. And unlikely that a friend of the pork-butcher would be the person whom Mr. Radnor first prohibited and then desired to receive. It hardly mattered:—considering that the Dutch Navy did really, incredible as it seems now, come sailing a good way up the River Thames, into the very main artery of Old England. And what thought the Tower of it? Skepsey looked at the Tower in sympathy, wondering whether the Tower had seen those impudent Dutch: a nice people at home, he had heard. Mr. Shaplow's Jarniman might actually be Mr. Radnor's, he inclined to think. At any rate he was now sure of the name.

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Wherein we behold the Couple Justified of Love having Sight of their Scourge

Fenellan, in a musing exclamation, that was quite spontaneous, had put a picture on the departing Skepsey, as observed from an end of the Lakelands upper terrace-walk. 'Queer little water-wagtail it is!' And Lady Grace Halley and Miss Graves and Mrs. Cormyn, snugly silken dry ones, were so taken with

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the pretty likeness after hearing Victor call the tripping dripping creature the happiest man in England, that they nursed it in their minds for a Bewick tailpiece to the chapter of a pleasant rural day. It imbedded the day in an idea that it had been rural.

We are indebted almost for construction to those who will define us briefly: we are but scattered leaves to the general comprehension of us until such a work of binding and labelling is done. And should the definition be not so correct as brevity pretends to make it at one stroke, we are at least rendered portable; thus we pass into the conceptions of our fellows, into the records, down to posterity. Anecdotes of England's happiest man were related, outlines of his personal history requested. His nomination in chief among the traditionally very merry Islanders was hardly borne out by the tale of his enchainment with a drunken yokefellow—unless upon the Durance version of the felicity of his countrymen; still, the waterwagtail carried it, Skepsey trotted into memories. Heroes conducted up Fame's temple-steps by ceremonious historians, who are studious, when the platform is reached, of the art of setting them beneath the flambeau of a final image, before thrusting them inside to be rivetted on their pedestals, have an excellent chance of doing the same, let but the provident narrators direct that image to paint the thing a moth-like humanity desires, in the thing it shrinks from. Miss Priscilla Graves now fastened her meditations upon Skepsey; and it was important to him.

Tobacco withdrew the haunting shadow of the Rev. Septimus Barmby from Nesta. She strolled beside Louise de Seilles, to breathe sweet-sweet in the dear

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friend's ear and tell her she loved her. The presence of the German had, without rousing animosity, damped the young Frenchwoman, even to a revulsion when her feelings had been touched by hearing praise of her France, and wounded by the subjects of the praise. She bore the national scar, which is barely skin-clothing of a gash that will not heal since her country was overthrown and dismembered. Colney Durance could excuse the unreasonableness in her, for it had a dignity, and she controlled it, and quietly suffered, trusting to the steady, tireless, concentrated aim of her France. In the Gallic mind of our time, France appears as a prematurely buried Glory, that heaves the mound oppressing breath and cannot cease; and calls hourly, at times keenly, to be remembered, rescued from the pain and the mould-spots of that foul sepulture. Mademoiselle and Colney were friends, partly divided by her speaking once of *revanche*; whereupon he assumed the chair of the Moralist, with its right to lecture, and went over to the enemy; his talk savoured of a German. Our holding of the balance, taking two sides, is incomprehensible to a people quivering with the double wound to body and soul. She was of Breton blood. Cymric enough was in Nesta to catch any thrill from her and join to her mood, if it hung out a colour sad or gay, and was noble, as any mood of this dear Louise would surely be.

Nataly was not so sympathetic. Only the Welsh and pure Irish are quick at the feelings of the Celtic French. Nataly came of a Yorkshire stock; she had the bravery, humaneness and generous temper of our civilized North, and a taste for mademoiselle's fine breeding, with a distaste for the singular air of

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superiority in composure which it was granted to mademoiselle to wear with an unassailable reserve when the roughness of the commercial boor was obtrusive. She said of her to Colney, as they watched the couple strolling by the lake below: 'Nesta brings her out of her frosts. I suppose it 's the presence of Dr. Schlesien. I have known it the same after an evening of Wagner's music.'

'Richard Wagner Germanized ridicule of the French when they were down,' said Colney. 'She comes of a blood that never forgives.'

'"Never forgives" is horrible to think of! I fancied you liked your "Kelts," as you call them.'

Colney seized on a topic that shelved a less agreeable one that he saw coming. 'You English won't descend to understand what does not resemble you. The French are in a state of feverish patriotism. You refuse to treat them for a case of fever. They are lopped of a limb: you tell them to be at rest!'

'You know I am fond of them.'

'And the Kelts, as they are called, can't and won't forgive injuries; look at Ireland, look at Wales, and the Keltic Scot. Have you heard them talk? It happened in the year 1400: it 's alive to them as if it were yesterday. Old History is as dead to the English as their first father. They beg for the privilege of pulling the forelock to the bearers of the titles of the men who took their lands from them and turn them to the uses of cattle. The Saxon English had, no doubt, a heavier thrashing than any people allowed to subsist ever received: you see it to this day; the crick of the neck at the name of a lord is now concealed and denied, but they

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have it and betray the effects; and it's patent in their Journals, all over their literature. Where it's not seen, another blood's at work. The Kelt won't accept that form of slavery. Let him be servile, supple, cunning, treacherous, and to appearance time-serving, he will always remember his day of manly independence and who robbed him: he is the poetic animal of the races of modern men.'

'You give him Pagan colours.'

'Natural colours. He does not offer the other cheek or turn his back to be kicked after a knock to the ground. Instead of asking him to forgive, which he cannot do, you must teach him to admire. A mercantile community guided by Political Economy from the ledger to the banquet presided over by its Dagon Capital, finds that difficult. However, there's the secret of him; that I respect in him. His admiration of an enemy or oppressor doing great deeds, wins him entirely. He is an active spirit, not your negative passive letter-of-Scripture Insensible. And his faults, short of ferocity, are amusing.'

'But the fits of ferocity!'

'They are inconscient, real fits. They come of a hot nerve. He is manageable, sober, too, when his mind is charged. As to the French people, they are the most mixed of any European nation; so they are packed with contrasts: they are full of sentiment, they are sharply logical; free-thinkers, devotees; affectionate, ferocious; frivolous, tenacious; the passion of the season operating like sun or moon on these qualities; and they can reach to ideality out of sensualism. Below your level, they're above it: —a paradox is at home with them!'

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'My friend, you speak seriously—an unusual compliment,' Nataly said, and ungratefully continued: 'You know what is occupying me. I want your opinion. I guess it. I want to hear—a mean thirst perhaps, and you would pay me any number of compliments to avoid the subject; but let me hear:—this house!'

Colney shrugged in resignation. 'Victor works himself out,' he replied.

'We are to go through it all again?'

'If you have not the force to contain him.'

'How contain him?'

Up went Colney's shoulders.

'You may see it all before you,' he said, 'straight as the Seine chaussée from the hill of La Roche Guyon.'

He looked for her recollection of the scene.

'Ah, the happy ramble that year!' she cried. 'And my Nesta just seven. We had been six months at Craye. Every day of our life together looks happy to me, looking back, though I know that every day had the same troubles. I don't think I'm deficient in courage; I think I could meet . . . But the false position so cruelly weakens me. I am no woman's equal when I have to receive or visit. It seems easier to meet the worst in life—danger, death, anything. Pardon me for talking so. Perhaps we need not have left Craye or Creckholt . . .?' she hinted an interrogation. 'Though I am not sorry; it is not good to be where one tastes poison. Here it may be as deadly, worse. Dear friend, I am so glad you remember La Roche Guyon. He was popular with the dear French people.'

'In spite of his accent.'

'It is not so bad!'

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'And that you'll defend!'

'Consider: these neighbours we come among; they may have heard . . .'

'Act on the assumption.'

'You forget the principal character. Victor promises; he may have learnt a lesson at Creckholt. But look at this house he has built. How can I—any woman—contain him! He must have society.'

'*Paraître!*'

'He must be in the front. He has talked of Parliament.'

Colney's liver took the thrust of a skewer through it. He spoke as in meditative encomium: 'His entry into Parliament would promote himself and family to a station of eminence naked over the Clock Tower of the House.'

She moaned. 'At the vilest, I cannot regret my conduct—bear what I may. I can bear real pain: what kills me is, the suspicion. And I feel it like a guilty wretch! And I do not feel the guilt! I should do the same again, on reflection. I do believe it saved him. I do; oh! I do, I do. I cannot expect my family to see with my eyes. You know them—my brother and sisters think I have disgraced them; they put no value on my saving him. It sounds childish; it is true. He had fallen into a terrible black mood.'

'He had an hour of gloom.'

'An hour!'

'But an hour, with him! It means a good deal.'

'Ah, friend, I take your words. He sinks terribly when he sinks at all.—Spare us a little while.—We have to judge of what is good in the circumstances:

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—I hear your reply! But the principal for me to study is Victor. You have accused me of being the voice of the enamoured woman. I follow him, I know; I try to advise; I find it is wisdom to submit. My people regard my behaviour as a wickedness or a madness. I did save him. I joined my fate with his. I am his mate, to help, and I cannot oppose him, to distract him. I do my utmost for privacy. He *must* entertain. Believe me, I feel for them—sisters and brother. And now that my sisters are married. . . . My brother has a man's hardness.'

'Colonel Dreighton did not speak harshly, at our last meeting.'

'He spoke of me?'

'He spoke in the tone of a brother.'

'Victor promises—I won't repeat it. Yes, I see the house! There appears to be a prospect, a hope—I cannot allude to it. Craye and Creckholt may have been some lesson to him.—Selwyn spoke of me kindly? Ah, yes, it is the way with my people to pretend that Victor has been the ruin of me, that they may come round to family sentiments. In the same way, his relatives, the Duvidney ladies, have their picture of the woman misleading him. Imagine *me* the naughty adventuress!'—Nataly falsified the thought insurgent at her heart, in adding: 'I do not say I am blameless.' It was a concession to the circumambient enemy, of whom even a good friend was a part, and not better than a respectful emissary. The dearest of her friends belonged to that hostile world. Only Victor, no other, stood with her against the world. Her child, yes; the love of her child she had; but the child's destiny was an alien phantom, looking at her with harder

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eyes than she had the vision of in her family. She did not say she was blameless, did not affect the thought. She would have wished to say, for small encouragement she would have said, that her case could be pleaded.

Colney's features were not inviting, though the expression was not repellent. She sighed deeply; and to count on something helpful by mentioning it, reverted to the 'prospect' which there appeared to be. 'Victor speaks of the certainty of his release.'

His release! Her language pricked a satirist's gall-bladder. Colney refrained from speaking to wound, and enjoyed a silence that did it.

'Do you see any possibility?—you knew her,' she said coldly.

'Counting the number of times he has been expecting the release, he is bound to believe it near at hand.'

'You don't?' she asked: her bosom was up in a crisis of expectation for the answer: and on a pause of half a minute, she could have uttered the answer herself.

He perceived the insane eagerness through her mask, and despised it, pitying the woman. 'And you don't,' he said. 'You catch at delusions, to excuse the steps you consent to take. Or you want me to wear the blinkers, the better to hoodwink your own eyes. You see it as well as I:—if you enter that house, you have to go through the same as at Creckholt:—and he 'll be the first to take fright.'

'No.'

'He finds you in tears: he is immensely devoted; he flings up all to protect "his Nataly."'

'No: you are unjust to him. He *would* fling up all:—'

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'But his Nataly prefers to be dragged through fire? As you please!'

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She bowed to her chastisement. One motive in her consultation with him came of the knowledge of his capacity to inflict it and his honesty in the act, and a thirst she had to hear the truth loud-tongued from him; together with a feeling that he was excessive and satiric, not to be read by the letter of his words: and in consequence, she could bear the lash from him, and tell her soul that he overdid it, and have an unjustly-treated self to cherish.—But in very truth she was a woman who loved to hear the truth; she was formed to love the truth her position reduced her to violate; she esteemed the hearing it as medical to her; she selected for counsellor him who would apply it: so far she went on the straight way; and the desire for a sustaining deception from the mouth of a trustworthy man set her hanging on his utterances with an anxious hope of the reverse of what was to come and what she herself apprehended, such as checked her pulses and iced her feet and fingers. The reason being, not that she was craven or absurd or paradoxical, but that, living at an intenser strain upon her nature than she or any around her knew, her strength snapped, she broke down by chance there where Colney was rendered spiteful in beholding the display of her inconsequent if not puling sex.

She might have sought his counsel on another subject, if a paralyzing chill of her frame in the foreview of it had allowed her to speak: she felt grave alarms in one direction, where Nesta stood in the eye of her father; besides an unformed dread

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that the simplicity in generosity of Victor's nature was doomed to show signs of dross ultimately, under the necessity he imposed upon himself to run out his forecasts, and scheme, and defensively compel the world to serve his ends, for the protection of those dear to him.

At night he was particularly urgent with her for the harmonious duet in praise of Lakelands; and plied her with questions all round and about it, to bring out the dulcet accord. He dwelt on his choice of costly marbles, his fireplace and mantelpiece designs, the great hall, and suggestions for imposing and beautiful furniture; concordantly enough, for the large, the lofty and rich of colour won her enthusiasm; but overwhelmingly to any mood of resistance; and strangely in a man who had of late been adopting, as if his own, a modern tone, or the social and literary hints of it, relating to the right uses of wealth, and the duty as well as the delight of living simply.

'Fredi was pleased.'

'Yes, she was, dear.'

'She is our girl, my love. "I could live and die here!" Live, she may. There's room enough.'

Nataly saw the door of a covert communication pointed at in that remark. She gathered herself for an effort to do battle.

'She's quite a child, Victor.'

'The time begins to run. We have to look forward now:—I declare, it's I who seem the provident mother for Fredi!'

'Let our girl wait; don't hurry her mind to . . . She is happy with her father and mother. She is in

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the happiest time of her life, before those feelings distract.'

'If we see good fortune for her, we can't let it pass her.'

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A pang of the resolution now to debate the case with Victor, which would be of necessity to do the avoided thing and roll up the forbidden curtain opening on their whole history past and prospective, was met in Nataly's bosom by the more bitter immediate confession that she was not his match. To speak would be to succumb; and shamefully after the effort; and hopelessly after being overborne by him. There was not the anticipation of a set contest to animate the woman's naturally valiant heart; he was too strong: and his vividness in urgency overcame her in advance, fascinated her sensibility through recollection; he fanned an inclination, lighted it to make it a passion, a frenzied resolve—she remembered how and when. She had quivering cause to remember the fateful day of her step, in a letter received that morning from a married sister, containing no word of endearment or proposal for a meeting. An unregretted day, if Victor would think of the dues to others; that is, would take station with the world to see his reflected position, instead of seeing it through their self-justifying knowledge of the honourable truth of their love, and pressing to claim and snatch at whatsoever the world bestows on its orderly subjects.

They had done evil to no one as yet. Nataly thought that; notwithstanding the outcry of the ancient and withered woman who bore Victor Radnor's name: for whom, in consequence of the rod the

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woman had used, this tenderest of hearts could summon no emotion. If she had it, the thing was not to be hauled up to consciousness. Her feeling was, that she forgave the wrinkled Malignity: pity and contrition dissolving in the effort to produce the placable forgiveness. She was frigid because she knew rightly of herself, that she in the place of power would never have struck so meanly. But the mainspring of the feeling in an almost remorseless bosom drew from certain chance expressions of retrospective physical distaste on Victor's part;—hard to keep from a short utterance between the nuptial two, of whom the unshamed exuberant male has found the sweet reverse in his mate, a haven of heavenliness, to delight in:—these conjoined with a woman's unspoken pleading ideas of her own, on her own behalf, had armed her jealously in vindication of Nature.

Now, as long as they did no palpable wrong about them, Nataly could argue her case in her conscience—deep down and out of hearing, where women under scourge of the laws they have not helped decree may and do deliver their minds. She stood in that subterranean recess for Nature against the Institutions of Man: a woman little adapted for the post of rebel; but to this, by the agency of circumstances, it had come; she who was designed by nature to be an ornament of those Institutions opposed them: and when thinking of the rights and the conduct of the decrepit Legitimate—virulent in a heathen vindictiveness declaring itself holy—she had Nature's logic, Nature's voice, for self-defence. It was eloquent with her, to the deafening of other voices in herself, even

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to the convincing of herself, when she was wrought by the fires within to feel elementally. The other voices within her issued of the acknowledged dues to her family and to the world—the civilization protecting women: sentences thereanent in modern books and Journals. But the remembrance of moods of fiery exaltation, when the Nature she called by name of Love raised the chorus within to stop all outer buzzing, was, in a perpetual struggle with a whirlpool, a constant support while she and Victor were one at heart. The sense of her standing alone made her sway; and a thought of differences with him caused frightful apprehensions of the abyss.

Luxuriously she applied to his public life for witness that he had governed wisely as well as affectionately so long; and he might therefore, with the chorusing of the world of public men, expect a woman blindfold to follow his lead. But no; we may be rebels against our time and its Laws: if we are really for Nature, we are not lawless. Nataly's untutored scruples, which came side by side with her ability to plead for her acts, restrained her from complicity in the ensnaring of a young man of social rank to espouse the daughter of a couple socially insurgent—stained, to common thinking, should denunciation come. The Nature upholding her fled at a vision of a stranger entangled. Pitiable to reflect, that he was not one of the adventurer-lords of prey who hunt and run down shadowed heiresses and are congratulated on their luck in a tolerating country! How was the young man to be warned? How, under the happiest of suppositions, propitiate his family! And such a family, if consenting with

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knowledge, would consent only for the love of money. It was angling with as vile a bait as the rascal lord's. Humiliation hung on the scheme; it struck to scorching in the contemplation of it. And it darkened her reading of Victor's character.

She did not ask for the specification of a 'good fortune that might pass'; wishing to save him from his wonted twists of elusiveness, and herself with him from the dread discussion it involved upon one point.

'The day was pleasant to all, except perhaps poor mademoiselle,' she said.

'Peridon should have come?'

'Present or absent, his chances are not brilliant, I fear.'

'And Pempton and Priscy!'

'They are growing cooler!'

'With their grotesque objections to one another's habits at table!'

'Can we ever hope to get them over it?'

'When Priscy drinks Port and Pempton munches beef, Colney says.'

'I should say, when they feel warmly enough to think little of their differences.'

'Fire smoothes the creases, yes; and fire is what they're both wanting in. Though Priscy has Concert-pathos in her voice:—couldn't act a bit! And Pempton's 'cello tones now and then have gone through me—simply from his fiddle-bow, I believe. Don't talk to me of feeling in a couple, within reach of one another and sniffing objections.—Good, then, for a successful day to-day so far?'

He neared her, wooing her; and she assented, with a franker smile than she had worn through the day.

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The common burden on their hearts—the simple discussion to come of the task of communicating dire actualities to their innocent Nesta—was laid aside.

CHAPTER XII

Treats of the Dumbness possible with Members of a Household having one Heart

Two that live together in union are supposed to be intimate on every leaf. Particularly when they love one another and the cause they have at heart is common to them in equal measure, the uses of a cordial familiarity forbid reserves upon important matters between them, as we think; not thinking of an imposed secretiveness, beneath the false external of submissiveness, which comes of an experience of repeated inefficiency to maintain a case in opposition, on the part of the loquently weaker of the pair. In Constitutional Kingdoms a powerful Government needs not to be tyrannical to lean oppressively; it is more serviceable to party than agreeable to country; and where the alliance of men and women binds a loving couple, of whom one is a torrent of persuasion, their differings are likely to make the other resemble a log of the torrent. It is borne along; it dreams of a distant corner of the way for a determined stand; it consents to its whirling in anticipation of an undated hour when it will no longer be neutral.

There may be, moreover, while each has the key of

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the fellow breast, a mutually sensitive nerve to protest against intrusion of light or sound. The cloud over the name of their girl could now strike Nataly and Victor dumb in their taking of counsel. She divined that his hint had encouraged him to bring the crisis nearer, and he that her comprehension had become tremblingly awake. They shrank, each of them, the more from an end drawing closely into view. All subjects glooming off or darkening up to it were shunned by them verbally, and if they found themselves entering beneath that shadow, conversation passed to an involuntary gesture, more explicit with him, significant of the prohibited, though not acknowledging it.

All the stronger was it Victor's purpose, leaping in his fashion to the cover of action as an escape from perplexity, to burn and scheme for the wedding of their girl—the safe wedding of that dearest, to have her protected, secure, with the world warm about her. And he well knew why his Nataly had her look of a closed vault (threatening, if opened, to thunder upon Life) when he dropped his further hints. He chose to call it feminine inconsistency, in a woman who walked abroad with a basket of marriage-ties for the market on her arm. He knew that she would soon have to speak the dark words to their girl; and the idea of any doing of it, caught at his throat. Reasonably she dreaded the mother's task; pardonably indeed. But it is for the mother to do, with a girl. He deputed it lightly to the mother because he could see himself stating the facts to a son. 'And, my dear boy, you will from this day draw your five thousand a year, and we double it on the day of

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your marriage, living at Lakelands or where you will.'

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His desire for his girl's protection by the name of one of our great Families, urged him to bind Nataly to the fact, with the argument, that it was preferable for the girl to hear their story during her green early youth, while she reposed her beautiful blind faith in the discretion of her parents, and as an immediate step to the placing of her hand in a husband's. He feared that her mother required schooling to tell the story vindicatingly and proudly, in a manner to distinguish instead of degrading or temporarily seeming to accept degradation.

The world would weigh on her confession of the weight of the world on her child; she would want inciting and strengthening, if one judged of her capacity to meet the trial by her recent bearing; and how was he to do it! He could not imagine himself encountering the startled, tremulous, nascent intelligence in those pure brown dark-lashed eyes of Nesta; he pitied the poor mother. Fancifully directing her to say this and that to the girl, his tongue ran till it was cut from his heart and left to wag dead colourless words.

The prospect of a similar business of exposition, certainly devolving upon the father in treaty with the fortunate youth, gripped at his vitals a minute, so intense was his pride in appearing woundless and scarless, a shining surface, like pure health's, in the sight of men. Nevertheless he skimmed the story, much as a lecturer strikes his wand on the prominent places of a map, that is to show us how he arrived at the principal point, which we are all agreed to find

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chiefly interesting. This with Victor was the naming of Nesta's bridal endowment. He rushed to it. 'My girl will have ten thousand a year settled on her the day of her marriage.' Choice of living at Lakelands was offered.

It helped him over the unpleasant part of that interview. At the same time, it moved him to a curious contempt of the youth. He had to conjure-up an image of the young man in person, to correct the sentiment: and it remained as a kind of bruise only half cured.

Mr. Dudley Sowerby was not one of the youths whose presence would rectify such an abstract estimate of the genus pursuer. He now came frequently of an evening, to practise a duet for flutes with Victor;—a Mercadante, honeyed and flowing; too honeyed to suit a style that, as Fenellan characterized it to Nataly, went through the music somewhat like an inquisitive tourist in a foreign town, conscientious to get to the end of the work of pleasure; until the notes had become familiar, when it rather resembled a constable's walk along the midnight streets into collision with a garlanded roysterer; and the man of order and the man of passion, true to the measure though they were, seeming to dissent, almost to wrangle, in their different ways of winding out the melody, on to the last movement; which was plainly a question between home to the strayed reveller's quarters or off to the lock-up. Victor was altogether the younger of the two. But his vehement accompaniment was a tutorship; Mr. Sowerby improved; it was admitted by Nesta and mademoiselle that he gained a show of feeling; he had learnt that feeling

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was wanted. Passion, he had not a notion of: otherwise he would not be delaying;—the interview, dramatized by the father of the young bud of womanhood, would be taking place, and the entry into Lakelands calculable, for Nataly's comfort, as under the ægis of the Cantor earldom. Gossip flies to a wider circle round the members of a great titled family, is inaudible; or no longer the diptherian whisper the commonalty hear of the commonalty: and so we see the social uses of our aristocracy survive. We do not want the shield of any family; it is the situation that wants it; Nataly ought to be awake to the fact. One blow and we have silenced our enemy: Nesta's wedding-day has relieved her parents.

Victor's thoughts upon the instrument for striking that blow, led him to suppose Mr. Sowerby might be meditating on the extent of the young lady's fortune. He talked randomly of money, in a way to shatter Nataly's conception of him. He talked of City affairs at table, as it had been his practice to shun the doing; and hit the resounding note on mines, which have risen in the market like the crest of a serpent, casting a certain spell upon the mercantile understanding. 'Fredi's diamonds from her own mine, or what once was—and she still reserves a share,' were to be shown to Mr. Sowerby.

Nataly respected the young fellow for not displaying avidity at the flourish of the bait, however it might be affecting him; and she fancied that he did laboriously, in his way earnestly, study her girl, to sound for harmony between them, previous to a wooing. She was a closer reader of social character than Victor; from refraining to run on the broad lines which are

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but faintly illustrative of the individual one in being common to all—unless we have hit by chance on an example of the downright in roguery or folly or simple goodness. Mr. Sowerby's bearing to Nesta was hardly warmed by the glitter of diamonds. His next visit showed him livelier in courtliness, brighter, fresher; but that was always his way at the commencement of every visit, as if his reflections on the foregone had come to a satisfactory conclusion; and the labours of the new study of the maiden ensued again in due course to deaden him.

Gentleman he was. In the recognition of his quality as a man of principle and breeding, Nataly was condemned by thoughts of Nesta's future to question whether word or act of hers should, if inclination on both sides existed, stand between her girl and a true gentleman. She counselled herself, as if the counsel were in requisition, to be passive; and so doing, she more acutely than Victor—save in his chance flashes—discerned the twist of her very nature caused by their false position. And her panacea for ills, the lost little cottage, would not have averted it: she would there have had the same coveting desire to name a man of breeding, honour, station, for Nesta's husband. Perhaps in the cottage, choosing at leisure, her consent to see the brilliant young creature tied to the best of dull men would have been unready, without the girl to push it. For the Hon. Dudley was lamentably her pupil in liveliness; he took the second part, as it is painful for a woman with the old-fashioned ideas upon the leading of the sexes to behold; resembling in his look the deaf, who constantly require to have an observation repeated; resembling the most intelli-

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gent of animals, which we do not name, and we reprove ourselves for seeing a likeness.

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Yet the likeness or apparent likeness would suggest that we have not so much to fear upon the day of the explanation to him. Some gain is there. Shameful thought! Nataly hastened her mind to gather many instances or indications testifying to the sterling substance in young Mr. Sowerby, such as a mother would pray for her son-in-law to possess. She discovered herself feeling as the burdened mother, not providently for her girl, in the choice of a mate. The perception was clear, and not the less did she continue working at the embroidery of Mr. Sowerby on the basis of his excellent moral foundations, all the while hoping, praying, that he might not be lured on to the proposal for Nesta. But her subservience to the power of the persuasive will in Victor—which was like the rush of a conflagration—compelled her to think realizingly of any scheme he allowed her darkly to read. Opposition to him, was comparable to the stand of blocks of timber before flame. Colney Durance had done her the mischief we take from the pessimist when we are overweighted: in darkening the vision of external aid from man or circumstance to one who felt herself mastered. Victor could make her treacherous to her wishes, in revolt against them, though the heart protested. His first conquest of her was in her blood, to weaken a spirit of resistance. For the precedent of submission is a charm upon the faint-hearted through love: it unwinds, unwills them. Nataly resolved fixedly, that there must be a day for speaking; and she had her moral sustainment in the resolve; she had also a torment-

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ing consciousness of material support in the thought, that the day was not present, was possibly distant, might never arrive. Would Victor's release come sooner? And that was a prospect bearing resemblance to hopes of the cure of a malady through a sharp operation.

These were matters going on behind the curtain; as wholly vital to her, and with him at times almost as dominant, as the spiritual in memory, when flesh has left but its shining track in dust of a soul outwritten; and all their talk related to the purchase of furniture, the expeditions to Lakelands, music, public affairs, the pardonable foibles of friends created to amuse their fellows, operatic heroes and heroines, exhibitions of pictures, the sorrows of Crowned Heads, so serviceable ever to mankind as an admonition to the ambitious, a salve to the envious!—in fine, whatsoever can entertain or affect the most social of couples, domestically without a care to appearance. And so far they partially—dramatically—deceived themselves by imposing on the world while they talked and duetted; for the purchase of furniture from a flowing purse is a cheerful occupation; also a City issuing out of hospital, like this poor City of London, inspires good citizens to healthy activity. But the silence upon what they were most bent on, had the sinister effect upon Victor, of obscuring his mental hold of the beloved woman, drifting her away from him. In communicating Fenellan's news through the lawyer Carling of Mrs. Burman's intentions, he was aware that there was an obstacle to his being huggingly genial, even candidly genial with her, until he could deal out further news, corroborative and consecutive, to show

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the action of things as progressive. Fenellan had sunk into his usual apathy:—and might plead the impossibility of his moving faster than the woman professing to transform herself into beneficence out of malignity;—one could hear him saying the words! Victor had not seen him since last Concert evening, and he deemed it as well to hear the words Fenellan's mouth had to say. He called at an early hour of the Westward tidal flow at the Insurance Office looking over the stormy square of the first of Seamen.

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After cursory remarks about the business of the Office and his friend's contributions to periodical literature, in which he was interested for as long as he had assurance that the safe income depending upon official duties was not endangered by them, Victor kicked his heels to and fro. Fenellan waited for him to lead.

'Have you seen that man, her lawyer, again?'

'I have dined with Mr. Carling:—capital claret.'

Emptiness was in the reply.

Victor curbed himself and said: 'By the way, you're not likely to have dealings with Blathenoy. The fellow has a screw to the back of a shifty eye; I see it at work to fix the look for business. I shall sit on the Board of my Bank. One hears things. He lives in style at Wrensham. By the way, Fredi has little Mab Mountney from Creckholt staying with her. You

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said of little Mabsy—"Here she comes into the room all pink and white, like a daisy." She 's the daisy still; reminds us of our girl at that age.—So, then, we come to another dead block!'

'Well, no; it 's a chemist's shop, if that helps us on,' said Fenellan, settling to a new posture in his chair. 'She 's there of an afternoon for hours.'

'You mean it 's *she*?'

'The lady. I'll tell you. I have it from Carling, worthy man; and lawyers can be brought to untruss a point over a cup of claret. He 's a bit of a "Mackenzie Man," as old aunts of mine used to say at home—a Man of Feeling. Thinks he knows the world, from having sifted and sorted a lot of our dustbins; as the modern Realists imagine it 's an exposition of positive human nature when they 've pulled down our noses to the worst parts—if there 's a worse where all are useful: but the Realism of the dogs is to have us by the nose:—excite it and befoul it, and you 're fearfully credible! You don't read that olfactory literature. However, friend Carling is a conciliatory carle. Three or four days of the week the lady, he says, drives to her chemist's, and there she sits in the shop; round the corner, as you enter; and sees all Charing in the shop looking-glass at the back; herself a stranger spectacle, poor lady, if Carling's picture of her is not overdone; with her fashionable no-bonnet striding the contribution chignon on the crown, and a huge square green shade over her forehead. Sits hours long, and cocks her ears at orders of applicants for drugs across the counter, and sometimes catches wind of a prescription, and consults her chemist, and thinks she 'll try it herself. It 's a basket of medicine

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bottles driven to Regent's Park pretty well every day.'

'Ha! Regent's Park!' exclaimed Victor, and shook at recollections of the district and the number of the house, dismal to him. London buried the woman deep until a mention of her sent her flaring over London. 'A chemist's shop! She sits there?'

'Mrs. Burman. We pass by the shop.'

'She had always a turn for drugs.—Not far from here, did you say? And every day! under a green shade?'

'Dear fellow, don't be suggesting ballads; we'll go now,' said Fenellan. 'It's true it's like sitting on the banks of the Stygian waters.'

He spied at an obsequious watch, that told him it was time to quit the office.

'You've done nothing?' Victor asked in a tone of no expectation.

'Only to hear that her latest medical man is Themison.'

'Where did you hear?'

'Across the counter of Boyle and Luckwort, the lady's chemists. I called the day before yesterday, after you were here at our last Board Meeting.'

'*The* Themison?'

'The great Dr. Themison; who kills you kindlier than most, and is much in request for it.'

'There's one of your echoes of Colney!' Victor cried. 'One gets dead sick of that worn-out old jibeing at doctors. They don't kill, you know very well. It's not to their interest to kill. They may take the relish out of life; and upon my word, I believe that helps to keep the patient living!'

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Fenellan sent an eye of discreet comic penetration travelling through his friend.

'The City's mending it's not the weary widow woman of the day when we capsized the diurnal with your royal Old Veuve,' he said, as they trod the pavement. 'Funny people, the English! They give you all the primeing possible for amusement and jollity, and devil a sentry-box for the exercise of it; and if you shake a leg publicly, partner or not, you're marched off to penitence. I complain, that they have no philosophical appreciation of human nature.'

'We pass the shop?' Victor interrupted him.

'You're in view of it in a minute. And what a square, for recreative dancing! And what a people, to be turning it into a place of political agitation! And what a country, where from morning to night it's an endless wrangle about the first conditions of existence! Old Colney seems right now and then:—they're the offspring of pirates, and they've got the manners and tastes of their progenitors, and the trick of quarrelling everlastingly over the booty. I'd have band-music here for a couple of hours, three days of the week at the least; and down in the East; and that forsaken North quarter of London; and the Baptist South too. But just as those omnibus-wheels are the miserable music of this London of ours, it's only too sadly true that the people are in the first rumble of the notion of the proper way to spend their lives. Now you see the shop: Boyle and Luckwort: there.'

Victor looked. He threw his coat open, and pulled the waistcoat, and swelled it, ahemming. 'That shop?' said he. And presently: 'Fenellan, I'm not

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superstitious, I think. Now listen; I declare to you, on the day of our drinking Old Veuve together last—you remember it,—I walked home up this way across the square, and I was about to step into that identical shop, for some household prescription in my pocket, having forgotten Nataly's favourite City chemists Fenbird and Jay, when—I'm stating a fact—I distinctly—I'm sure of the shop—felt myself plucked back by the elbow; pulled back: the kind of pull when you have to put a foot backward to keep your equilibrium.'

So does memory inspired by the sensations contribute an additional item for the colouring of history.

He touched the elbow, showed a flitting face of crazed amazement in amusement, and shrugged and half-laughed, dismissing the incident, as being perhaps, if his hearer chose to have it so, a gem of the rubbish tumbled into the dust-cart out of a rather exceptional householder's experience.

Fenellan smiled indulgently. 'Queer things happen. I recollect reading in my green youth of a clergyman, who mounted a pulpit of the port where he was landed after his almost solitary rescue from a burning ship at midnight in mid-sea, to inform his congregation, that he had overnight of the catastrophe a personal Warning right in his ear from a Voice, when at his bed or bunk-side, about to perform the beautiful ceremony of undressing: and the Rev. gentleman was to lie down in his full uniform, *not so much as to relieve himself of his boots*, the Voice insisted twice; and he obeyed it, despite the discomfort to his poor feet; and he jumped up in his boots to the cry of Fire, and he got them providentially over the scuffling

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deck straight at the first rush into the boat awaiting them, and had them safe on and polished the day he preached the sermon of gratitude for the special deliverance. There was a Warning! and it might well be called, as he called it, from within. We're cared for, never doubt. *Aide-toi.* Be ready dressed to help yourself in a calamity, or you'll not stand in boots at your next Sermon, contrasting with the burnt. That sounds like the moral.'

'She could have seen me,' Victor threw out an irritable suggestion. The idea of the recent propinquity set hatred in motion.

'Scarcely likely. I'm told she sits looking on her lap, under the beetling shade, until she hears an order for tinctures or powders, or a mixture that strikes her fancy. It's possible to do more suicidal things than sit the afternoons in a chemist's shop and see poor creatures get their different passports to Orcus.'

Victor stepped mutely beneath the windows of the bellied glass-urns of chemical wash. The woman might be inside there now! She might have seen his figure in the shop-mirror! And *she* there! The wonder of it all seemed to be, that his private history was not walking the streets. The thinness of the partition concealing it, hardly guaranteed a day's immunity:—because this woman would live in London, in order to have her choice of a central chemist's shop, where she could feed a ghastly imagination on the various recipes . . . and while it would have been so much healthier for her to be living in a recess of the country!

He muttered: 'Diseases—drugs!'

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Those were the corresponding two strokes of the pendulum which kept the woman going.

'And deadly spite.' That was the emanation of the monotonous horrible conflict, for which, and by which, the woman lived.

In the neighbourhood of the shop, he could not but think of her through the feelings of a man scorched by a furnace.

A little further on, he said: 'Poor soul!' He confessed to himself, that latterly he had, he knew not why, been impatient with her, rancorous in thought, as never before. He had hitherto aimed at a picturesque tolerance of her vindictiveness; under suffering, both at Craye and Creckholt; and he had been really forgiving. He accused her of dragging him down to humanity's lowest.

But if she did that, it argued the possession of a power of a sort.

Her station in the chemist's shop he passed almost daily, appeared to him as a sudden and a terrific rush to the front; though it was only a short drive from the house in Regent's Park; but having shaken-off that house, he had pushed it back into mists, obliterated it. The woman certainly had a power.

He shot away to the power he knew of in himself; his capacity for winning men in bodies, the host of them, when it came to an effort of his energies: men and, individually, women. Individually, the women were to be counted on as well; warm supporters.

It was the admission of a doubt that he might expect to enrol them collectively. Eyeing the men, he felt his command of them. Glancing at congregated women, he had a chill. The Wives and Spinsters

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in ghostly judicial assembly: that is, the phantom of the offended collective woman: that is, the regnant Queen Idea issuing from our concourse of civilized life to govern Society, and pronounce on the orderly, the tolerable, the legal, and banish the rebellious: these maintained an aspect of the stand against him.

Did Nataly read the case: namely, that the crowned collective woman is not to be subdued? And what are we to say of the indefinite but forcible Authority, when we see it upholding Mrs. Burman to crush a woman like Nataly!

Victor's novel exercises in reflection were bringing him by hard degrees to conceive it to be the Impalpable which has prevailing weight. Not many of our conquerors have scored their victories on the road of that index: nor has duration been granted them to behold the minute measure of value left even tangible after the dust of the conquest subsides. The passing by a shop where a broken old woman might be supposed to sit beneath her green forehead-shade—Venetian-blind of a henbane-visage!—had precipitated him into his first real grasp of the abstract verity: and it opens on to new realms, which are a new world to the practical mind. But he made no advance. He stopped in a fever of sensibility, to contemplate the powerful formless vapour rolling from a source that was nothing other than yonder weak lonely woman.

In other words, the human nature of the man was dragged to the school of its truancy by circumstances, for him to learn the commonest of sums done on a slate, in regard to payment of debts and the unrelaxing grip of the creditor on the defaulter. Debtors are

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always paying: like those who are guilty of the easiest thing in life, the violation of Truth, they have made themselves bondmen to pay, if not in substance, then in soul; and the nipping of the soul goes on for as long as the concrete burden is undischarged. You know the Liar; you must have seen him diminishing, until he has become a face without features, withdrawn to humanity's preliminary sketch (some half-dozen frayed threads of woeful outline on our original tapestry-web); and he who did the easiest of things, he must from such time sweat in being the prodigy of inventive nimbleness, up to the day when he propitiates Truth by telling it again. *There* is a repentance that does reconstitute! It may help to the traceing to springs of a fable whereby men have been guided thus far out of the wood.

Victor would have said truly that he loved Truth; that he paid every debt with a scrupulous exactitude: money, of course; and prompt apologies for a short brush of his temper. Nay, he had such a conscience for the smallest eruptions of a transient irritability, that the wish to say a friendly mending word to the *Punctilio* donkey of London Bridge, softened his retrospective view of the fall there, more than once. Although this man was a presentation to mankind of the force in Nature which drives to unresting speed, which is the vitality of the heart seen at its beating after a plucking of it from the body, he knew himself for the reverse of lawless; he inclined altogether to good citizenship. So social a man could not otherwise incline. But when it came to the examination of accounts between Mrs. Burman and himself, spasms of physical revulsion, loathings, his excessive human

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nature, put her out of Court. To men, it was impossible for him to speak the torments of those days of the monstrous alliance. The heavens were cognizant. He pleaded his case in their accustomed hearing:—a youngster tempted by wealth, attracted, besought, snared, revolted, etc. And Mrs. Burman, when roused to jealousy, had shown it by teazing him for a confession of his admiration of splendid points in the beautiful Nataly, the priceless fair woman living under their roof, a contrast of very life with the corpse and shroud; and she seen by him daily, singing with him, her breath about him, her voice incessantly upon every chord of his being!

He pleaded successfully. But the silence following the verdict was heavy; the silence contained an unheard thunder. It was the sound, as when out of Court the public is dissatisfied with a verdict. Are we expected to commit a social outrage in exposing our whole case to the public?—Imagine it for a moment as done. Men are ours at a word—or at least a word of invitation. Women we woo; fluent smooth versions of our tortures, mixed with permissible courtship, win the individual woman. And that unreasoning collective woman, icy, deadly, condemns the poor racked wretch who so much as remembers them! She is the enemy of Nature.—Tell us how? She is the slave of existing conventions.—And from what cause? She is the artificial production of a state that exalts her so long as she sacrifices daily and hourly to the artificial.

Therefore she sides with Mrs. Burman—the foe of Nature: who, with her arts and gold lures, has now possession of the Law (the brass idol wor-

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shipped by the collective) to drive Nature into desolation.

He placed himself to the right of Mrs. Burman, for the world to behold the couple: and he lent the world a sigh of disgust.

What he could not do, as in other matters he did, was to rise above the situation, in a splendid survey and rapid view of the means of reversing it. He was too social to be a captain of the socially insurgent; imagination expired.

But having a courageous Nataly to second him!—how then? It was the succour needed. Then he would have been ready to teach the world that Nature —*honest* Nature—is more to be prized than Convention: a new Æra might begin.

The thought was tonic for an instant and illuminated him springingly. It sank, excused for the flaccidity by Nataly's want of common adventurous daring. She had not taken to Lakelands; she was purchasing furniture from a flowing purse with a heavy heart —unfeminine, one might say; she preferred to live obscurely; she did not, one had to think—but it was unjust: and yet the accusation, that she did not cheerfully make a strain and spurt on behalf of her child, pressed to be repeated.

These short glimpses at reflection in Victor were like the verberant twang of a musical instrument that has had a smart blow, and wails away independent of the player's cunning hand. He would have said, that he was more his natural self when the cunning hand played on him, to make him praise and uplift his beloved: mightily would it have astonished him to contemplate with assured perception in his own

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person the Nature he invoked. But men invoking Nature, do not find in her the Holy Mother she in such case becomes to her daughters, whom she so persecutes. Men call on her for their defence, as a favourable witness: she is a note of their rhetoric. They are not bettered by her sustainment; they have not, as women may have, her enæmic aid at a trying hour. It is not an effort at epigram to say, that whom she scourges most she most supports.

An Opera-placard drew his next remark to Fenellan.

'How Wagner seems to have stricken the Italians! Well, now, the Germans have their emperor to head their armies, and I say that the German emperor has done less for their lasting fame and influence than Wagner has done. He has affected the French too; I trace him in Gounod's Romeo et Juliette—and we don't gain by it; we have a poor remuneration for the melody gone; think of the little shepherd's pipeing in *Mireille*; and there's another in *Sapho*—delicious. I held out against Wagner as long as I could. The Italians don't much more than Wagnerize in exchange for the loss of melody. They would be wiser in going back to Pergolese, Campagnole. The *Mefistofele* was good—of the school of the foreign master. *Aïda* and *Otello*, no. I confess to a weakness for the old barley-sugar of Bellini or a Donizetti-Serenade. Aren't you seduced by cadences? Never mind Wagner's tap of his pædagogue's bâton—a cadence catches me still. Early taste for barley-sugar, perhaps! There's a march in Verdi's *Attila* and *I Lombardi*, I declare I'm in military step when I hear them, as in the old days, after leaving the Opera. Fredi takes little Mab Mountney to her first Opera

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to-night. Enough to make us old ones envious! You remember your first Opera, Fenellan? *Sonnambula*, with me. I tell you, it would task the highest poetry—say, require, if you like—showing all that's noblest, splendidest, in a young man, to describe its effect on me. I was dreaming of *my box* at the Opera for a year after. The *Huguenots* to-night. Not the best suited for little Mabsy; but she'll catch at the *Rataplan*. Capital Opera; we used to think it the best, before we had *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* and the *Meistersinger*.'

Victor hinted notes of the Conspiration Scene closing the Third Act of the *Huguenots*. That sombre Chorus brought Mrs. Burman before him. He drummed the *Rataplan*, which sent her flying. The return of a lively disposition for dinner and music completed his emancipation from the yoke of the baleful creature sitting half her days in the chemist's shop; save that a thought of drugs brought the smell, and the smell the picture; she threatened to be an apparition at any moment pervading him through his nostrils. He spoke to Fenellan of hunger for dinner, a need for it; singular in one whose appetite ran to the stroke of the hour abreast with Armandine's kitchen-clock. Fenellan proposed a glass of sherry and bitters at his Club over the way. He had forgotten a shower of black-balls (attributable to the conjurations of old Até) on a certain past day. Without word of refusal, Victor entered a wine-merchant's office, where he was unknown, and stating his wish for bitters and dry sherry, presently received the glass, drank, nodded to the administering clerk, named the person whom he had

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obliged and refreshed, and passed out, remarking to Fenellan: 'Colney on Clubs! he's right; they're the mediæval in modern times, our Baron's castles, minus the Baron; dead against public life and social duties. Business excuses my City Clubs; but I shall take my name off my Club up West.'

'More like monasteries, with a Committee for Abbot, and Whist for the services,' Fenellan said. 'Or tabernacles for the Chosen, and Grangousier playing Divinity behind the veil. Well, they're social.'

'Sectionally social, means anything but social, my friend. However—and the monastery had a bell for the wanderer! Say, I'm penniless or poundless, up and down this walled desert of a street, I feel, I must feel, these palaces—if we're Christian, not Jews: not that the Jews are uncharitable; they set an example, in fact . . .'

He rambled, amusingly to the complacent hearing of Fenellan, who thought of his pursuit of wealth and grand expenditure.

Victor talked as a man having his mind at leaps beyond the subject. He was nearing to the Idea he had seized and lost on London Bridge.

The desire for some good news wherewith to inspirit Nataly, withdrew him from his ineffectual chase. He had nought to deliver; on the contrary, a meditation concerning her comfort pledged him to concealment: which was the no step, or passive state, most abhorrent to him.

He snatched at the name of Themison.

With Dr. Themison fast in his grasp, there was a report of progress to be made to Nataly; and not at all an empty report.

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Themison, then: he leaned on Themison. The woman's doctor should have an influence approaching to authority with her.

Land-values in the developing Colonies, formed his theme of discourse to Fenellan: let Banks beware.

Fenellan saw him shudder and rub the back of his head. 'Feel the wind?' he said.

Victor answered him with that humane thrill of the deep tones, which at times he had: 'No: don't be alarmed; I feel the devil. If one has wealth and a desperate wish, he will speak. All he does, is to make me more charitable to those who give way to him. I believe in a devil.'

'Horns and tail?'

'Bait and hook.'

'I haven't wealth, and I wish only for dinner,' Fenellan said.

'You know that Armandine is never two minutes late. By the way, you haven't wealth—you have me.'

'And I thank God for you!' said Fenellan, acutely reminiscent of his having marked the spiritual adviser of Mrs. Burman, the Rev. Groseman Buttermore, as a man who might be useful to his friend.

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A fortnight later, an extremely disconcerting circumstance occurred: Armandine was ten minutes behind the hour with her dinner. But the surprise and stupe-

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faction expressed by Victor, after glances at his watch, were not so profound as Fenellan's, on finding himself exchangeing the bow with a gentleman bearing the name of Dr. Themison. His friend's rapidity in pushing the combinations he conceived, was known: Fenellan's wonder was not so much that Victor had astonished him again, as that he should be called upon again to wonder at his astonishment. He did; and he observed the doctor and Victor and Nataly: aided by dropping remarks. Before the evening was over, he gathered enough of the facts, and had to speculate only on the designs. Dr. Themison had received a visit from the husband of Mrs. Victor Radnor concerning her state of health. At an interview with the lady, laughter greeted him; he was confused by her denial of the imputation of a single ailment: but she, to recompose him, let it be understood, that she was anxious about her husband's condition, he being certainly overworked; and the husband's visit passed for a device on the part of the wife. She admitted a willingness to try a change of air, if it was deemed good for her husband. Change of air was prescribed to each for both. 'Why not drive to Paris?' the doctor said, and Victor was taken with the phrase.

He told Fenellan at night that Mrs. Burman, he had heard, was by the sea, on the South coast. Which of her maladies might be in the ascendant, he did not know. He knew little. He fancied that Dr. Themison was unsuspicious of the existence of a relationship between him and Mrs. Burman: and Fenellan opined, that there had been no communication upon private affairs. What, then, was the object in going to Dr. Themison? He treated her body merely; whereas

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the Rev. Groseman Buttermore could be expected to impose upon her conduct. Fenellan appreciated his own discernment of the superior uses to which a spiritual adviser may be put, and he too agreeably flattered himself for the corrective reflection to ensue, that he had not done anything. It disposed him to think a happy passivity more sagacious than a restless activity. We should let Fortune perform her part at the wheel in working out her ends, should we not?—for, ten to one, nine times out of ten we are thwarting her if we stretch out a hand. And with the range of enjoyments possessed by Victor, why this unceasing restlessness? Why, when we are not near drowning, catch at apparent straws, which may be instruments having sharp edges? Themison, as Mrs. Burman's medical man, might tell the lady tales that would irritate her bag of venom.

Rarely though Fenellan was the critic on his friend, the shadow cast over his negligent hedonism by Victor's boiling pressure, drove him into the seat of judgement. As a consequence, he was rather a dull table-guest in the presence of Dr. Themison, whom their host had pricked to anticipate high entertainment from him. He did nothing to bridge the crevasse and warm the glacier air at table when the doctor, anecdotal intentionally to draw him out, related a decorous but pungent story of one fair member of a sweet new sisterhood in agitation against the fixed establishment of our chain-mail marriage-tie. An anecdote of immediate diversion was wanted, expected: and Fenellan sat stupidly speculating upon whether the doctor knew of a cupboard locked. So that Dr. Themison was carried on by Lady Grace

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Halley's humorous enthusiasm for the subject to dilate and discuss and specify, all in the irony of a judicial leaning to the side of the single-minded social adventurers, under an assumed accord with his audience; concluding: 'So there 's an end of Divorce.'

'By the trick of multiplication,' Fenellan, now reassured, was content to say. And that did not extinguish the cracker of a theme; handled very carefully, as a thing of fire, it need scarce be remarked, three young women being present.

Nataly had eyes on her girl, and was pleased at an alertness shown by Mr. Sowerby to second her by crossing the dialogue. As regarded her personal feelings, she was hardened, so long as the curtains were about her to keep the world from bending black brows of inquisition upon one of its culprits. But her anxiety was vigilant to guard her girl from an infusion of any of the dread facts of life not coming through the mother's lips: and she was a woman having the feminine mind's pudency in that direction, which does not consent to the revealing of much. Here was the mother's dilemma: her girl—Victor's girl, as she had to think in this instance,—the most cloudless of the young women of earth, seemed, and might be figured as really, at the falling of a crumb off the table of knowledge, taken by the brain to shoot up to terrific heights of surveyal; and there she rocked; and only her youthful healthiness brought her down to grass and flowers. She had once or twice received the electrical stimulus, to feel and be as lightning, from a seizure of facts in infinitesimal doses, guesses caught off maternal evasions or the circuitous explanation of matters touching sex in here and there a newspaper,

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harder to repress completely than sewer-gas in great cities; and her mother had seen, with an apprehensive pang of anguish, how witheringly the scared young intelligence of the innocent creature shocked her sensibility. She foresaw the need to such a flameful soul, as bride, wife, woman across the world, of the very princeliest of men in gifts of strength, for her sustainer and guide. And the provident mother knew this peerless gentleman: but he had his wife.

Delusions and the pain of the disillusioning were to be feared for the imaginative Nesta; though not so much as that on some future day of a perchance miserable yokemating—a subjection or an entanglement—the nobler passions might be summoned to rise for freedom, and strike a line to make their logically estimable sequence from a source not honourable before the public. Constantly it had to be thought, that the girl was her father's child.

At present she had no passions; and her bent to the happiness she could so richly give, had drawn her sailing smoothly over the harbour-bar of maidenhood; where many of her sisters are disconcerted to the loss of simplicity. If Nataly with her sleepless watchfulness and forecasts partook of the French mother, Nesta's Arcadian independence likened her somewhat in manner to the Transatlantic version of the English girl. Her high physical animation and the burden of themes it plucked for delivery carried her flowing over impediments of virginal self-consciousness, to set her at her ease in the talk with men; she had not gone through the various Nursery exercises in dissimulation; she had no appearance of praying forgiveness of men for the original sin of being woman; and

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no tricks of lips or lids, or traitor scarlet on the cheeks, or assumptions of the frigid mask, or indicated reserve-cajoleries. Neither ignorantly nor advisedly did she play on these or other bewitching strings of her sex, after the fashion of the stamped innocents, who are the boast of Englishmen and matrons, and thrill societies with their winsome ingenuousness; and who sometimes when unguarded meet an artful serenader, that is a cloaked bandit, and is provoked by their performances, and knows anthropologically the nature behind the devious show; a sciential rascal; as little to be excluded from our modern circles as Eve's own old deuce from Eden's garden: whereupon, opportunity inviting, both the fool and the cunning, the pure donkey princess of insular eulogy, and the sham one, are in a perilous pass.

Damsels of the swiftness of mind of Nesta cannot be ignorant utterly amid a world where the hints are hourly scattering seed of the inklings; when vileness is not at work up and down our thoroughfares, proclaiming its existence with tableau and trumpet. Nataly encountered her girl's questions, much as one seeks to quiet an enemy. The questions had soon ceased. Excepting repulsive and rejected details, there is little to be learnt when a little is known: in populous communities, density only will keep the little out. Only stupidity will suppose that it can be done for the livelier young. English mothers forethoughtful for their girls, have to take choice of how to do battle with a rough-and-tumble Old England, that lumbers bumping along, craving the precious things, which can be had but in semblance under the conditions allowed by laziness to subsist, and so curst

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of its shifty inconsequence as to worship in the concrete an hypocrisy it abhors in the abstract. Nataly could smuggle or confiscate here and there a newspaper; she could not interdict or withhold every one of them, from a girl ardent to be in the race on all topics of popular interest: and the newspapers are occasionally naked savages; the streets are imperfectly garmented even by day; and we have our stumbling social anecdotist, our spout-mouthed young man, our eminently silly woman, our slippery one; our slimy one, the Rahab of Society; not to speak of Mary the maid and the footman William. A vigilant mother has to contend with these and the like in an increasing degree. How best?

There is a method: one that Colney Durance advocated. The girl's intelligence and sweet blood invited a trial of it. Since, as he argued, we cannot keep the poisonous matter out, mothers should prepare and strengthen young women for the encounter with it, by lifting the veil, baring the world, giving them knowledge to arm them for the fight they have to sustain; and thereby preserve them further from the spiritual collapse which follows the nursing of a false ideal of our life in youth:—this being, Colney said, the prominent feminine disease of the time, common to all our women; that is, all having leisure to shine in the sun or wave in the wind as flowers of the garden.

Whatever there was of wisdom in his view, he spoilt it for English hearing, by making use of his dry compressed sentences. Besides he was a bachelor; therefore but a theorist. And his illustrations of his theory were grotesque; meditation on them extracted

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a corrosive acid to consume, in horrid derision, the sex, the nation, the race of man. The satirist too devotedly loves his lash to be a persuasive teacher. Nataly had excuses to cover her reasons for not listening to him.

One reason was, as she discerned through her confusion at the thought, that the day drew near for her speaking fully to Nesta; when, between what she then said and what she said now, a cruel contrast might strike the girl: and in toneing revelations now, to be more consonant with them then;—in softening and shading the edges of social misconduct, it seemed painfully possible to be sowing in the girl's mind something like the reverse of moral precepts, even to smoothing the way to a rebelliousness partly or wholly similar to her own. But Nataly's chief and her appeasing reason for pursuing the conventional system with this exceptional young creature, referred to the sentiments on that subject of the kind of young man whom a mother elects from among those present and eligible, as perhaps next to worthy to wed the girl, by virtue of good promise in the moral department. She had Mr. Dudley Sowerby under view; far from the man of her choice: and still the practice of decorum, discretion, a pardonable fastidiousness, appears, if women may make any forecast of the behaviour of young men or may trust the faces they see, to promise a future stability in the husband. Assuredly a Dudley Sowerby would be immensely startled to find in his bride a young woman more than babily aware of the existence of one particular form of naughtiness on earth.

Victor was of no help: he had not an idea upon the

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right education of the young of the sex. Repression and mystery, he considered wholesome for girls; and he considered the enlightening of them—to some extent—a prudential measure for their defence; and premature instruction is a fire-water to their wild-in-woods understanding; and histrionic innocence is no doubt the bloom on corruption; also the facts of current human life, in the crude of the reports or the cooked of the sermon in the newspapers, are a noxious diet for our daughters; whom nevertheless we cannot hope to be feeding always on milk: and there is a time when their adorable pretty ignorance, if credibly it exists out of noodledom, is harmful: —but how beautiful the shining simplicity of our dear young English girls!—He was one of the many men to whose minds women come in pictures and are accepted much as they paint themselves. Like his numerous fellows, too, he required a conflict with them, and a worsting at it, to be taught, that they are not the mere live stock we scheme to dispose of for their good:—unless Love should interpose, he would have exclaimed. He broke from his fellows in his holy horror of a father's running counter to love. Nesta had only to say, that she loved another, for Dudley Sowerby to be withdrawn into the background of aspirants. But love was unknown to the girl.

Outwardly, the plan of the Drive to Paris had the look of Victor's traditional hospitality. Nataly smiled at her incorrigibly lagging intelligence of him, on hearing that he had invited a company: 'Lady Grace, for gaiety; Peridon and Catkin, fiddles; Dudley Sowerby and myself, flutes; Barmby, intonation; in

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all, nine of us; and by the dear old Normandy route, for the sake of the voyage, as in old times; towers of Dieppe in the morning-light; and the lovely road to the capital! Just three days in Paris, and home by any of the other routes. It's the drive we want. Boredom in wet weather, we defy; we have our Concert—an hour at night and we're sure of sleep.' It had a sweet simple air, befitting him; as when in bygone days they travelled with the joy of children. For travelling shook Nataly out of her troubles and gave her something of the child's inheritance of the wisdom of life—*the living ever so little ahead of ourselves*; about as far as the fox in view of the hunt. That is the soul of us out for novelty, devouring as it runs, an endless feast; and the body is eagerly after it, recording the pleasures, a daily chase. Remembrance of them is almost a renewal, anticipation a revival. She enraptured Victor with glimpses of the domestic fun she had ceased to show sign of since the revelation of Lakelands. Her only regret was on account of the exclusion of Colney Durance from the party, because of happy memories associating him with the Seine-land, and also that his bilious criticism of his countrymen was moderated by a trip to the Continent. Fenellan reported Colney to be 'busy in the act of distilling one of his Prussic acid essays.' Fenellan would have jumped to go. He informed Victor, as a probe, that the business of the Life Insurance was at periods 'fearfully necrological.' Inexplicably, he was not invited. Did it mean, that he was growing dull? He looked inside instead of out, and lost the clue.

His behaviour on the evening of the departure

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showed plainly what would have befallen Mr. Sowerby on the expedition, had not he as well as Colney been excluded. Two carriages and a cab conveyed the excursionists, as they merrily called themselves, to the terminus. They were Victor's guests; they had no trouble, no expense, none of the nipper reckonings which dog our pleasures;—the state of pure bliss. Fenellan's enviousness drove him at the Rev. Mr. Barmby until the latter jumped to the seat beside Nesta in her carriage, Mademoiselle de Seilles and Mr. Sowerby facing them. Lady Grace Halley, in the carriage behind, heard Nesta's laugh; which Mr. Barmby had thought vacuous, beseeming little girls, that laugh at nothings. She questioned Fenellan.

'Oh,' said he, 'I merely mentioned that the Rev. gentleman carries his musical instrument at the bottom of his trunk.'

She smiled: 'And who are in the cab?'

'Your fiddles are in the cab, in charge of Peridon and Catkin. Those two would have writhed like head and tail of a worm, at a division on the way to the station. Point a finger at Peridon, you run Catkin through the body. They're a fabulous couple.'

Victor cut him short. 'I deny that those two are absurd.'

'And Catkin's toothache is a galvanic battery upon Peridon.'

Nataly strongly denied it. Peridon and Catkin pertained to their genial picture of the dear sweet nest in life; a dale never traversed by the withering breath they dreaded.

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Fenellan then, to prove that he could be as bad in his way as Colney, fell to work on the absent Miss Priscilla Graves and Mr. Pempton, with a pitchfork's exaltation of the sacred attachment of the divergently meritorious couple, and a melancholy reference to implacable obstacles in the principles of each. The pair were offending the amatory corner in the generous good sense of Nataly and Victor; they were not to be hotly protected, though they were well enough liked for their qualities, except by Lady Grace, who revelled in the horrifying and scandalizing of Miss Graves. Such a specimen of the Puritan middle English as Priscilla Graves, was eastwind on her skin, nausea to her gorge. She wondered at having drifted into the neighbourhood of a person resembling in her repellent formal chill virtuousness a windy belfry tower, down among those districts of suburban London or appalling provincial towns passed now and then with a shudder, where the funereal square bricks-up the Church, that Arctic hen-mother sits on the square, and the moving dead are summoned to their round of penitential exercise by a monosyllabic tribulation-bell. Fenellan's graphic sketch of the teetotaller woman seeing her admirer pursued by Eumenides flagons—abominations of emptiness—to the banks of the black river of suicides, where the one most wretched light is Inebriation's nose; and of the vegetarian violoncello's horror at his vision of the long procession of the flocks and herds into his lady's melodious Ark of a mouth, excited and delighted her antipathy. She was amused to transports at the station, on hearing Mr. Barmby, in a voice all ophicleide, remark: 'No, I carry no instrument.' The

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habitation of it at the bottom of his trunk, was not forgotten when it sounded.

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Reclining in warmth on the deck of the vessel at night, she said, just under Victor's ear: 'Where are those two?'

'Bid me select the couple,' said he.

She rejoined: 'Silly man'; and sleepily gave him her hand for good night, and so paralyzed his arm, that he had to cover the continued junction by saying more than he intended: 'If they come to an understanding!'

'Plain enough on one side.'

'You think it suitable?'

'Perfection; and well-planned to let them discover it.'

'This is really my favourite route; I love the salt-water and the night on deck.'

'Go on.'

'How?'

'Number your loves. It would tax your arithmetic.'

'I can hate.'

'Not me?'

Positively the contrary, an impulsive squeeze of fingers declared it; and they broke the link, neither of them sensibly hurt; though a leaf or two of the ingenuities, which were her thoughts, turned over in the phantasies of the lady; and the gentleman was taught to feel that a never so slightly lengthened compression of the hand female shoots within us both straight and far and round the corners. There you have Nature, if you want her naked in her elements, for a text. He loved his Nataly truly, even

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fervently, after the twenty years of union; he looked about at no other woman; it happened only that the touch of one, the chance warm touch, put to motion the blind forces of our mother so remarkably surcharging him. But it was without kindling. The lady, the much cooler person, did nurse a bit of flame. She had a whimsical liking for the man who enjoyed simple things when commanding the luxuries; and it became a fascination, by extreme contrast, at the reminder of his adventurous enterprises in progress while he could so childishly enjoy. Women who dance with the warrior-winner of battles, and hear him talk his ball-room trifles to amuse, have similarly a smell of gunpowder to intoxicate them.

For him, a turn on the deck brought him into new skies. Nataly lay in the cabin. She used to be where Lady Grace was lying. A sort of pleadable, transparent, harmless hallucination of the renewal of old service induced him to refresh and settle the fair semi-slumberer's pillow, and fix the tarpaulin over her silks and wraps; and bend his head to the soft mouth murmuring thanks. The women who can dare the *nuit blanche*, and under stars; and have a taste for holiday larks after their thirtieth, are rare; they are precious. Nataly nevertheless was approved for guarding her throat from the nightwind. And a softer southerly breath never crossed Channel! The very breeze he had wished for! Luck was with him.

Nesta sat by the rails of the vessel beside her Louise. Mr. Sowerby in passing, exchanged a description of printed agreement with her, upon the beauty of the night—a good neutral topic for the encounter of the sexes: not that he wanted it neutral;

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it furnished him with a vocabulary. Once he perceptibly washed his hands of dutiful politeness, in addressing Mademoiselle de Seilles, likewise upon the beauty of the night; and the French lady, thinking—too conclusively from the breath on the glass at the moment, as it is the Gallic habit—that if her dear Nesta must espouse one of the uninteresting creatures called men in her native land, it might as well be this as another, agreed that the night was very beautiful.

'He speaks grammatical French,' Nesta commented on his achievement. 'He contrives in his walking not to wet his boots,' mademoiselle rejoined.

Mr. Peridon was a more welcome sample of the islanders, despite an inferior pretension to accent. He burned to be near these ladies, and he passed them but once. His enthusiasm for Mademoiselle de Seilles was notorious. Gratefully the compliment was acknowledged by her, in her demure fashion; with a reserve of comic intellectual contempt for the man who could not see that women, or Frenchwomen, or eminently she among them, must have *their* enthusiasm set springing in the breast before they can be swayed by the most violent of outer gales. And say, that she is uprooted;—he does but roll a log. Mr. Peridon's efforts to perfect himself in the French tongue touched her.

A night of May leaning on June, is little more than a deliberate wink of the eye of light. Mr. Barmby, an exile from the ladies by reason of an addiction to tobacco, quitted the forepart of the vessel at the first greying. Now was the cloak of night worn threadbare, and grey astir for the heralding of gold, day visibly ready to show its warmer throbs. The gentle

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waves were just a stronger grey than the sky, perforce of an interfusion that shifted gradations; they were silken, in places oily grey; cold to drive the sight across their playful monotonousness for refuge on any far fisher-sail.

Miss Radnor was asleep, eyelids benignly down, lips mildly closed. The girl's cheeks held colour to match a dawn yet unawakened though born. They were in a nest shading amid silks of pale blue, and there was a languid flutter beneath her chin to the catch of the morn-breeze. Bacchanal threads astray from a disorderly front-lock of rich brown hair were alive over an eyebrow showing like a seal upon the lightest and securest of slumbers.

Mr. Barmby gazed, and devoutly. Both the ladies were in their oblivion; the younger quite saintly; but the couple inseparably framed, elevating to behold; a reproach to the reminiscence of pipes. He was near; and quietly the eyelids of mademoiselle lifted on him. Her look was grave, straight, uninquiring, soon accurately perusing; an arrow of Artemis for penetration. He went by, with the sound in the throat of a startled bush-bird taking to wing; he limped off some nail of the deck, as if that young Frenchwoman had turned the foot to a hoof. Man could not be more guiltless, yet her look had perturbed him; nails conspired; in his vexation, he execrated tobacco. And ask not why, where reason never was.

Nesta woke babbling on the subject she had relinquished for sleep. Mademoiselle touched a feathery finger at her hair and hood during their silvery French chimes.

Mr. Sowerby presented the risen morning to them,

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with encomiums, after they had been observing every variation in it. He spoke happily of the pleasant passage, and of the agreeable night; particularly of the excellent idea of the expedition by this long route at night; the prospect of which had disfigured him with his grimace of speculation—apparently a sourness that did not exist. Nesta had a singular notion, coming of a girl's mingled observation and intuition, that the impressions upon this gentleman were in arrear, did not strike him till late. Mademoiselle confirmed it when it was mentioned; she remembered to have noticed the same in many small things. And it was a pointed perception.

Victor sent his girl down to Nataly, with a summons to hurry up and see sunlight over the waters. Nataly came; she looked, and the outer wakened the inner, she let the light look in on her, her old feelings danced to her eyes like a string of bubbles in ascent. 'Victor, Victor, it seems only yesterday that we crossed, twelve years back—was it?—and in May, and saw the shoal of porpoises, and five minutes after, Dieppe in view. Dear French people! I share your love for France.'

'Home of our holidays!—the "drives"; and they may be the happiest. And fifty minutes later we were off the harbour; and Natata landed, a stranger; and at night she was the heroine of the town.'

Victor turned to a stately gentleman and passed his name to Nataly: 'Sir Rodwell Blachington, a neighbour of Lakelands.' She understood that Lady Grace Halley was acquainted with Sir Rodwell:—hence this dash of brine to her lips while she was drinking of happy memories, and Victor evidently was pluming himself upon his usual luck in the fortuitous encounter

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with an influential neighbour of Lakelands. He told Sir Rodwell the story of how they had met in the salle à manger of the hotel the impresario of a Concert in the town, who had in his hand the doctor's certificate of the incapacity of the chief cantatrice to appear, and waved it, within a step of suicide. 'Well, to be brief, my wife—"*noble dame Anglaise*," as the man announced her on the Concert platform, undertook one of the songs, and sang another of her own—pure contralto voice, as you will say; with the result that there was a perfect tumult of enthusiasm. Next day, the waiters of the hotel presented her with a bouquet of Spring flowers, white, and central violets. It was in the Paris papers, under the heading: *Une amie d'outre Manche*—I think that was it?' he asked Nataly.

'I forget,' said she.

He glanced at her: a cloud had risen. He rallied her, spoke of the old Norman silver cross which the manager of the Concert had sent, humbly imploring her to accept the small memento of his gratitude. She nodded an excellent artificial brightness.

And there was the coast of France under young sunlight over the waters. Once more her oft-petitioning wish through the years, that she had entered the ranks of professional singers, upon whom the moral scrutiny is not so microscopic, invaded her, resembling a tide-swell into rock-caves, which have been filled before and left to emptiness, and will be left to emptiness again. Nataly had the intimation visiting us when, in a decline of physical power, the mind's ready vivacity to conjure illusions forsakes us; and it was, of a wall ahead, and a force impelling her against it, and no hope of deviation. And this is the

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featureless thing, Destiny; not without eyes, if we have a conscience to throw them into it to look at us.

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Counsel to her to live in the hour, came, as upon others on the vessel, from an active breath of the salt prompting to healthy hunger; and hardly less from the splendour of the low full sunlight on the waters, the skimming and dancing of the thousands of golden shells away from under the globe of fire.

CHAPTER XV

A Patriot Abroad

Nine days after his master's departure, Daniel Skepsey, a man of some renown of late, as a subject of reports and comments in the newspapers, obtained a passport, for the identification, if need were, of his missing or misapprehended person in a foreign country, of the language of which three unpronounceable words were knocking about his head to render the thought of the passport a staff of safety; and on the morning that followed he was at speed through Normandy, to meet his master rounding homeward from Paris, at a town not to be spoken as it is written, by reason of the custom of the good people of the country, with whom we would fain live on neighbourly terms:—yes, and they had proof of it, not so very many years back, when they were enduring the worst which can befall us:—though Mr. Durance, to whom he was indebted for the writing of the place of his destination large on a card, and the wording of the French sound beside it,

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CHAPTER XV
A Patriot Abroad

besides the jotting down of trains and the station for the change of railways, Mr. Durance could say, that the active form of our sympathy consisted in the pouring of cheeses upon them when they were prostrate and unable to resist!

A kind gentleman, Mr. Durance, as Daniel Skepsey had recent cause to know, but often exceedingly dark; not so patriotic as desireable, it was to be feared; and yet, strangely indeed, Mr. Durance had said cogent things on the art of boxing and on manly exercises, and he hoped—he was emphatic in saying he hoped—we should be regenerated. He must have meant, that boxing on a grand scale would contribute to it. He said, that a blow now and then was wholesome for us all. He recommended a monthly private whipping for old gentlemen who decline the use of the gloves, to disperse their humours; not excluding Judges and Magistrates:—he could hardly be in earnest. He spoke in a clergyman's voice, and said it would be payment of good assurance money, beneficial to their souls: he seemed to mean it. He said, that old gentlemen were bottled vapours, and it was good for them to uncork them periodically. He said, they should be excused half the strokes if they danced nightly—they resented motion. He seemed sadly wanting in veneration.

But he might not positively intend what he said. Skepsey could overlook everything he said, except the girding at England. For where is a braver people, notwithstanding appearances! Skepsey knew of dozens of gallant bruisers, ready for the cry to strip to the belt; worthy, with a little public encouragement, to rank beside their grandfathers of the

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Ring, in the brilliant times when royalty and nobility countenanced the manly art, our nursery of heroes, and there was not the existing unhappy division of classes. He still trusted to convince Mr. Durance, by means of argument and happy instances, historical and immediate, that the English may justly consider themselves the elect of nations, for reasons better than their accumulation of the piles of gold—better than 'usurers' reasons,' as Mr. Durance called them. Much that Mr. Durance had said at intervals was, although remembered almost to the letter of the phrase, beyond his comprehension, and he put it aside, with penitent blinking at his deficiency.

All the while, he was hearing a rattle of voluble tongues around him, and a shout of stations, intelligible as a wash of pebbles, and blocks in a torrent. Generally the men slouched when they were not running. At Dieppe he had noticed muscular fellows; he admitted them to be nimbler on the legs than ours; and that may count both ways, he consoled a patriotic vanity by thinking; instantly rebuking the thought; for he had read chapters of Military History. He sat eyeing the front row of figures in his third-class carriage, musing on the kind of soldiers we might, heaven designing it, have to face, and how to beat them until he gazed on Rouen, knowing by the size of it and by what Mr. Durance had informed him of the city on the river, that it must be the very city of Rouen, not so many years back a violated place, at the mercy of a foreign foe. Strong pity laid hold of Skepsey. He fortified the heights for defence, but saw at a glance that it was the city for modern artillery to command, crush and enter. He lost idea of these

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afflicted people as foes, merely complaining of their attacks on England, and their menaces in their Journals and pamphlets; and he renounced certain views of the country to be marched over on the road by this route to Paris, for the dictation of terms of peace at the gates of the French capital, sparing them the shameful entry; and this after the rout of their attempt at an invasion of the Island!

A man opposite him was looking amicably on his lively grey eyes. Skepsey handed a card from his pocket. The man perused it, and crying: 'Dreux?' waved out of the carriage-window at a westerly distance, naming Rouen as not the place, not at all, totally other. Thus we are taught, that a foreign General, ignorant of the language, must confine himself to defensive operations at home; he would be a child in the hands of the commonest man he meets. Brilliant with thanks in signs, Skepsey drew from his friend a course of instruction in French names, for our necessities on a line of march. The roads to Great Britain's metropolis, and the supplies of forage and provision at every stage of a march on London, are marked in the military offices of these people; and that, with their barking Journals, is a piece of knowledge to justify a belligerent return for it. Only we pray to be let live peacefully.

Fervently we pray it when this good man, a total stranger to us, conducts an ignorant foreigner from one station to another through the streets of Rouen, after a short stoppage at the buffet and assistance in the identification of coins; then, lifting his cap to us, retires.

And why be dealing wounds and death? It is a

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more blessed thing to keep the Commandments. But how is it possible to keep the Commandments if you have a vexatious wife?

Martha Skepsey had given him a son to show the hereditary energy in his crying and coughing; and it was owing, he could plead, to her habits and her tongue, that he sometimes, that he might avoid the doing of worse—for she wanted correction and was improved by it—courted the excitement of a short exhibition of skill, man to man, on publicans' first floors. He could have told the magistrate so, in part apology for the circumstances dragging him the other day, so recently, before his Worship; and he might have told it, if he had not remembered Captain Dartrey Fenellan's words about treating women chivalrously: which was interpreted by Skepsey as correcting them, when called upon to do it, but never exposing them:—only, if allowed to account for the circumstances pushing us into the newspapers, we should not present so guilty a look before the public.

Furthermore, as to how far it is the duty of a man to serve his master, there is likewise question: whether is he, while receiving reproof and punishment for excess of zeal in the service of his master, not to mention the welfare of the country, morally—without establishing it as a principle—exonerated? Miss Graves might be asked: save that one would not voluntarily trouble a lady on such subjects. But supposing, says the opposing counsel, now at work in Skepsey's conscience, supposing this act, for which, contravening the law of the land, you are reproved and punished, to be agreeable to you, how then? We answer, supposing it—and we take uncomplainingly the magis-

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trate's reproof and punishment—morally justified: can it be expected of us to have the sense of guilt, although we wear and know we wear a guilty look before the public?

His master and the dear ladies would hear of it; perhaps they knew of it now; with them would rest the settlement of the distressing inquiry. The ladies would be shocked: ladies cannot bear any semblance of roughness, not even with the gloves:—and knowing, as they must, that our practice of the manly art is for their protection!

Skepsey's grievous prospect of the hour to come under judgement of a sex that was ever a riddle unread, clouded him on the approach to Dreux. He studied the country and the people eagerly; he forbore to conduct great military operations. Mr. Durance had spoken of big battles round about the town of Dreux; also of a wonderful Mausoleum there, not equally interesting. The little man was in deeper gloom than a day sobering on crimson dusk when the train stopped and his quick ear caught the sound of the station, as pronounced by his friend at Rouen.

He handed his card to the station-master. A glance, and the latter signalled to a porter, saying: 'Paradis'; and the porter laid hold of Skepsey's bag. Skepsey's grasp was firm; he pulled, the porter pulled. Skepsey heard explanatory speech accompanying a wrench. He wrenched back with vigour, and in his own tongue explained, that he held to the bag because his master's letters were in the bag, all the way from England. For a minute, there was a downright trial of muscle and will: the porter appeared furiously excited, Skepsey had a look of cooled steel. Then the French-

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man, requiring to shrug, gave way to the Englishman's eccentric obstinacy, and signified that he was his guide. Quite so, and Skepsey showed alacrity and confidence in following; he carried his bag. But with the remembrance of the kindly serviceable man at Rouen, he sought to convey to the porter, that the terms of their association were cordial. A waving of the right hand to the heavens ratified the treaty on the French side. Nods and smiles and gesticulations, with across-Channel vocables, as it were Dover cliffs to Calais sands and back, pleasantly beguiled the way down to the Hotel du Paradis, under the Mausoleum heights, where Skepsey fumbled at his pocket for coin current; but the Frenchman, all shaken by a tornado of negation, clapped him on the shoulder, and sang him a quatrain. Skepsey had in politeness to stand listening, and blinking, plunged in the contrition of ignorance, eclipsed. He took it to signify something to the effect, that money should not pass between friends. It was the amatory farewell address of Henri IV. to his *Charmante Gabrielle*: and with—

'Percé de mille dards,
L'honneur m'appelle
Au champ de Mars,'

the Frenchman, in a backing of measured steps, apologized for his enforced withdrawal from the stranger who had captured his heart.

Skepsey's card was taken in the passage of the hotel. A clean-capped maid, brave on the legs, like all he had seen of these people, preceded him at quick march to an upper chamber. When he descended, bag in hand, she flung open the salon-door of a table d'hôte, where a goodly number were dining and

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chattering; waiters drew him along to the section occupied by his master's party. A chair had been kept vacant for him; his master waved a hand, his dear ladies graciously smiled; he stuck the bag in front of a guardian foot, growing happy. He could fancy they had not seen the English newspapers. And his next observation of the table showed him wrecked and lost: Miss Nesta's face was the oval of a woeful O at his wild behaviour in England during their absence. She smiled. Skepsey had nevertheless to consume his food—excellent, very tasty soup—with the sour sauce of the thought that he must be tongue-tied in his defence for the time of the dinner.

'No, dear Skips, please! you are to enjoy yourself,' said Nesta.

He answered confusedly, trying to assure her that he was doing so, and he choked.

His master had fixed his arrival for twenty minutes earlier. Skepsey spoke through a cough of long delays at stations. The Rev. Septimus Barmby, officially peacemaker, sounded the consequent excuse for a belated comer. It was final; such is the power of sound. Looks were cast from the French section of the table at the owner of the prodigious organ. Some of the younger men, intent on the charms of Albion's daughters, expressed in a sign and a word or two alarm at what might be beneath the flooring: and '*Pas encore Lui!*' and '*Son avant-courier!*' and other flies of speech passed on a whiff, under politest of cover, not to give offence. But prodigies claim attention.

Our English, at the close of the dinner, consented to say it was good, without specifying a dish, because

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a selection of this or that would have seemed to italicize, and commit them, in the presence of ladies, to a notice of the matter-of-course, beneath us, or the confession of a low sensual enjoyment; until Lady Grace Halley named the particular dressing of a tête de veau approvingly to Victor; and he stating, that he had offered a suggestion for the *menu* of the day, Nataly exclaimed, that she had suspected it: upon which Mr. Sowerby praised the *menu*, Mr. Barmby, Peridon and Catkin named other dishes, there was the right after-dinner ring in Victor's ears, thanks to the woman of the world who had travelled round to nature and led the shackled men to deliver themselves heartily. One tap, and they are free. That is, in the moments after dinner, when nature is at the gates with them. Only, it must be a lady and a prevailing lady to give the tap. They need (our English) and will for the ages of the process of their transformation need a queen.

Skepsey, bag in hand, obeyed the motion of his master's head and followed him.

He was presently back, to remain with the ladies during his master's perusal of letters. Nataly had decreed that he was not to be troubled; so Nesta and mademoiselle besought him for a recital of his French adventures; and strange to say, he had nothing to tell. The journey, pregnant at the start, exciting in the course of it, was absolutely blank at the termination. French people had been very kind; he could not say more. But there was more; there was a remarkable fulness, if only he could subordinate it to narrative. The little man did not know, that time was wanted for imagination to make the roadway or riverway of a

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true story, unless we press to invent; his mind had been too busy on the way for him to clothe in speech his impressions of the passage of incidents at the call for them. Things had happened, numbers of interesting minor things, but they all slipped as water through the fingers; and he being of the band of honest creatures who will not accept a lift from fiction, drearily he sat before the ladies, confessing to an emptiness he was far from feeling.

Nesta professed excessive disappointment. 'Now, if it had been in England, Skips!' she said, under her mother's gentle gloom of brows.

He made show of melancholy submission.

'There, Skepsey, you have a good excuse, we are sure,' Nataly said.

And women, when they are such ladies as these, are sent to prove to us that they can be a blessing; instead of the dreadful cry to Providence for the reason of the spread of the race of man by their means! He declared his readiness, rejecting excuses, to state his case to them, but for his fear of having it interpreted as an appeal for their kind aid in obtaining his master's forgiveness. Mr. Durance had very considerately promised to intercede. Skepsey dropped a hint or two of his naughty proceedings drily, aware that their untutored antipathy to the manly art would not permit of warmth.

Nesta said: 'Do you know, Skips, we saw a grand exhibition of fencing in Paris.'

He sighed. 'Ladies can look on at fencing! foils and masks! Captain Dartrey Fenellan has shown me, and says, the French are our masters at it.' He bowed constrainedly to mademoiselle.

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'You box, M. Skepsey!' she said.

His melancholy increased: 'Much discouragement from Government, Society! If ladies . . . but I do not venture. They are not against Games. But these are not a protection . . . to them, when needed; to the country. The country seems asleep to its position. Mr. Durance has remarked on it:—though I would not always quote Mr. Durance . . . indeed, he says, that England has invested an Old Maid's All in the Millennium, and is ruined if it delays to come. "Old maid," I do not see. I do not—if I may presume to speak of myself in the same breath with so clever a gentleman, agree with Mr. Durance in everything. But the chest-measurement of recruits, the stature of the men enlisted, prove that we are losing the nursery of our soldiers.'

'We are taking them out of the nursery, Skips, if you're for quoting Captain Dartrey,' said Nesta. 'We'll never haul down our flag, though, while we have him!'

'Ah! Captain Dartrey!' Skepsey was refreshed by the invocation of the name.

A summons to his master's presence cut short something he was beginning to say about Captain Dartrey.

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His master opened on the bristling business.

'What's this, of your name in the papers, your

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appearing before a magistrate, and a fine? Tell the tale shortly.'

Skepsey fell upon his attitude for dialectical defence: the modest form of the two hands at rolling play and the head deferentially sidecast. But knowing that he had gratified his personal tastes in the act of serving his master's interests, an interfusion of sentiments plunged him into self-consciousness; an unwonted state with him, clogging to a simple story.

'First, sir, I would beg you to pardon the printing of your name beside mine . . .'

'Tush: on with you.'

'Only to say, necessitated by the circumstances of the case. I read, that there was laughter in the court at my exculpation of my conduct—as I have to call it; and there may have been. I may have expressed myself. . . . I have a strong feeling for the welfare of the country.'

'So, it seems, you said to the magistrate. Do you tell me, that the cause of your gross breach of the law, was a consideration for the welfare of the country? Run on the facts.'

'The facts—I must have begun badly, sir.' Skepsey rattled the dry facts in his head to right them. From his not having begun well, they had become dry as things underfoot. It was an error to have led off with the sentiments. 'Two very, two very respectable persons — respectable — were desirous to witness a short display of my, my system, I would say; of my science, they call it.'

'Don't be nervous. To the point; you went into a field five miles out of London, in broad day, and stood in a ring, the usual riff-raff about you!'

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'With the gloves: and not for money, sir: for the trial of skill; not very many people. I cannot quite see the breach of the law.'

'So you told the magistrate. You were fined for your inability to quite see. And you had to give security.'

'Mr. Durance was kindly responsible for me, sir: an acquaintance of the magistrate.'

'This boxing of yours is a positive mania, Skepsey. You must try to get the better of it—must! And my name too! I'm to be proclaimed, as having in my service an inveterate pugilist—who breaks the law from patriotism! Male or female, these very respectable persons—the people your show was meant for?'

'Male, sir. Females! . . . that is, not the respectable ones.'

'Take the opinion of the respectable ones for your standard of behaviour in future.'

'It was a mere trial of skill, sir, to prove to one of the spectators, that I could be as good as my word. I wished, I may say, to conciliate him, partly. He would not—he judged by size—credit me with . . . he backed my adversary Jerry Scroom—a sturdy boxer, without the knowledge of the first principles.'

'You beat him?'

'I think I taught the man that I could instruct, sir; he was complimentary before we parted. He thought I could not have lasted. After the second round, the police appeared.'

'And you ran!'

'No, sir; I had nothing on my conscience.'

'Why not have had your pugilistic display in a publican's room in town, where you could have

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hammer-nailed and ding-donged to your heart's content for as long as you liked!'

'That would have been preferable, from the point of view of safety from intrusion, I can admit—speaking humbly. But one of the parties—I had a wish to gratify him—is a lover of old English times and habits and our country scenes. He wanted it to take place on green grass. We drove over Hampstead in three carts and a gig, as a company of pleasure—as it was. A very beautiful morning. There was a rest at a public-house. Mr. Shaplow traces the misfortune to that. Mr. Jarniman, I hear, thinks it what he calls a traitor in the camp. I saw no sign; we were all merry and friendly.'

'Jarniman?' said Victor sharply. 'Who is the Jarniman?'

'Mr. Jarniman is, I am to understand from the acquaintance introducing us—a Mr. Shaplow I met in the train from Lakelands one day, and again at the corner of a street near Drury Lane, a ham and beef shop kept by a Mrs. Jarniman, a very stout lady, who does the chief carving in the shop, and is the mother of Mr. Jarniman: he is in a confidential place, highly trusted.' Skepsey looked up from the hands he soaped: 'He is a curious mixture; he has true enthusiasm for boxing, he believes in ghosts. He mourns for the lost days of prize-fighting, he thinks that spectres are on the increase. He has a very large appetite, depressed spirits. Mr. Shaplow informs me he is a man of substance, in the service of a wealthy lady in poor health, expecting a legacy and her appearance to him. He has the look—Mr. Shaplow assures me he does not drink to excess: he is a slow drinker.'

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Victor straightened: 'Bad way of health, you said?'

'Mr. Jarniman spoke of his expectations as being immediate: he put it, that he expected her spirit to be out for him to meet it any day—or night. He desires it. He says, she has promised it—on oath, he says, and must feel that she must do her duty to him before she goes, if she is to appear to him with any countenance after. But he is anxious for her in any case to show herself, and says, he should not have the heart to reproach her. He has principles, a tear for suffering; he likes to be made to cry. Mrs. Jarniman, his mother, he is not married, is much the same so far, except ghosts; she will not have them; except after strong tea, they come, she says, come to her bed. She is foolish enough to sleep in a close-curtained bed. But the poor lady is so exceedingly stout that a puff of cold would carry her off, she fears.'

Victor stamped his foot. 'This man Jarniman serves a lady now in a—serious, does he say? Was he precise?'

'Mr. Jarniman spoke of a remarkable number of diseases; very complicated, he says. He has no opinion of doctors. He says, that the lady's doctor and the chemist—she sits in a chemist's shop and swallows other people's prescriptions that take her fancy. He says, her continuing to live is wonderful. He has no reason to hurry her, only for the satisfaction of a natural curiosity.'

'He mentioned her name?'

'No name, sir.'

Skepsey's limpid grey eyes confirmed the negative to Victor, who was assured that the little man stood clean of any falsity.

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'You are not on equal terms. You and the magistrate have helped him to know who it is *you* serve, Skepsey.'

'Would you please to direct me, sir?'

'Another time. Now go and ease your feet with a run over the town. We have music in half an hour. That you like, I know. See chiefly to amusing yourself.'

Skepsey turned to go; he murmured, that he had enjoyed his trip.

Victor checked him: it was to ask whether this Jarniman had specified one, any one of the numerous diseases afflicting his aged mistress.

Now Jarniman had shocked Skepsey with his blunt titles for a couple of the foremost maladies assailing the poor lady's decayed constitution: not to be mentioned, Skepsey thought, in relation to ladies; whose organs and functions we, who pay them a proper homage by restricting them to the sphere so worthily occupied by their mothers up to the very oldest date, respectfully curtain; their accepted masters are chivalrous to them, deploring their need at times for the doctors and drugs. He stood looking most unhappy. 'She was to appear, sir, in a few—perhaps a week, a month.'

A nod dismissed him.

The fun of the expedition (and Dudley Sowerby had wound himself up to relish it) was at night in the towns, when the sound of instrumental and vocal music attracted crowds beneath the windows of the hotel, and they heard *zon, zon, violon, flûte et basse*; not bad fluting, excellent fiddling, such singing as a maestro, conducting his own Opera, would have approved. So Victor said of his darlings' voices.

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Nesta's and her mother's were a perfect combination; Mr. Barmby's trompe in union, sufficiently confirmed the popular impression, that they were artistes. They had been ceremoniously ushered to their carriages, with expressions of gratitude, at the departure from Rouen; and the Boniface at Gisors had entreated them to stay another night, to give an entertainment. Victor took his pleasure in letting it be known, that they were a quiet English family, simply keeping-up the habits they practised in Old England: all were welcome to hear them while they were doing it; but they did not give entertainments.

The pride of the pleasure of reversing the general idea of English dulness among our neighbours, was perceived to have laid fast hold of Dudley Sowerby at Dreux. He was at the window from time to time, counting heads below. For this reason or a better, he begged Nesta to supplant the flute duet with the soprano and contralto of the Helena section of the *Mefistofele*, called the Serenade: *La Luna immobile*. She consulted her mother, and they sang it. The crowds below, swoln to a block of the street, were dead still, showing the instinctive good manners of the people. Then mademoiselle astonished them with a Provençal or Cevennes air, Huguenot, though she was Catholic; but it suited her mezzo-soprano tones; and it rang massively of the martial-religious. To what heights of spiritual grandeur might not a Huguenot France have marched! Dudley Sowerby, heedlessly, under an emotion that could be stirred in him with force, by the soul of religion issuing through music, addressed his ejaculation to Lady Grace Halley. She did not shrug or snub him, but rejoined: 'I could

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go to battle with that song in the ears.' She liked seeing him so happily transformed; and liked the effect of it on Nesta when his face shone in talking. He was at home with the girl's eyes, as he had never been. A song expressing in one the combative and devotional, went to the springs of his blood; for he was of an old warrior race, beneath the thick crust of imposed peaceful maxims and commercial pursuits and habitual stiff correctness. As much as wine, will music bring out the native bent of the civilized man: endow him with language too. He was as if unlocked; he met Nesta's eyes and ran in a voluble interchange, that gave him flattering afterthoughts; and at the moment sensibly a new and assured, or to some extent assured, station beside a girl so vivid; by which the young lady would be helped to perceive his unvoiced solider gifts.

Nataly observed them, thinking of Victor's mastering subtlety. She had hoped (having clearly seen the sheep's eye in the shepherd) that Mr. Barmby would be watchful to act as a block between them; and therefore she had stipulated for his presence on the journey. She remembered Victor's rapid look of readiness to consent:—he reckoned how naturally Mr. Barmby would serve as a foil to any younger man. Mr. Barmby had tried all along to perform his part: he had always been thwarted; notably once at Gisors, where by some cunning management he and mademoiselle found themselves in the cell of the prisoner's Nail-wrought work while Nesta had to take Sowerby's hand for help at a passage here and there along the narrow outer castle-walls. And Mr. Barmby, upon occasions, had set that dimple in Nesta's cheek

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quivering, though Simeon Fenellan was not at hand, and there was no telling how it was done, beyond the evidence that Victor willed it so.

From the day of the announcement of Lakelands, she had been brought more into contact with his genius of dexterity and foresight than ever previously: she had bent to the burden of it more; had seen herself and everybody else outstripped—herself, of course; she did not count in a struggle with him. But since that red dawn of Lakelands, it was almost as if he had descended to earth from the skies. She now saw his mortality in the miraculous things he did. The reason of it was, that through the perceptible various arts and shifts on her level, an opposing spirit had plainer view of his aim, to judge it. She thought it a mean one.

The power it had to hurry her with the strength of a torrent to an end she dreaded, impressed her physically; so far subduing her mind, in consequence, as to keep the idea of absolute resistance obscure, though her bosom heaved with the breath; but what was her own of a mind hung hovering above him, criticizing; and involuntarily, discomfortingly. She could have prayed to be led blindly or blindly dashed on: she could trust him for success; and her critical mind seemed at times a treachery. Still she was compelled to judge.

When he said to her at night, pressing both her hands: 'This is the news of the day, my love! It's death at last. We shall soon be thanking heaven for freedom'; her fingers writhed upon his and gripped them in a torture of remorse on his behalf. A shattering throb of her heart gave her sight of herself as well.

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For so it is with the woman who loves in subjection, she may be a critic of the man, she is his accomplice.

'You have a letter, Victor?'

'Confirmation all round: Fenellan, Themison, and now Skepsey.'

He told her the tale of Skepsey and Jarniman, colouring it, as any interested animated conduit necessarily will. Neither of them smiled.

The effort to think soberly exhausted and rolled her back on credulity.

It might not be to-day or next week or month: but so much testimony pointed to a day within the horizon, surely!

She bowed her head to heaven for forgiveness. The murderous hope stood up, stood out in forms and pictures. There was one of a woman at her ease at last in the reception of guests; contrasting with an ironic haunting figure of the woman of queenly air and stature under a finger of scorn for a bold-faced impostor. Nataly's lips twitched at the remembrance of quaint whimpers of complaint to the Fates, for directing that a large instead of a rather diminutive woman should be the social offender fearing exposure. Majesty in the criminal's dock, is a confounding spectacle. To the bosom of the majestic creature, all her glorious attributes have become the executioner's implements. She must for her soul's health believe that a day of release and exoneration approaches.

'Barmby!—if my dear girl would like him best,' Victor said, in tenderest undertones, observing the shadowing variations of her face; and pierced her cruelly, past explanation or understanding;—not

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that she would have objected to the Rev. Septimus as officiating clergyman.

She nodded. Down rolled the first big tear.

We cry to women; Land, ho!—a land of palms after storms at sea; and at once they inundate us with a deluge of eye-water.

'Half a minute, dear Victor, not longer,' Nataly said, weeping, near on laughing over his look of wanton abandonment to despair at sight of her tears. 'Don't mind me. I am rather like Fenellan's laundress, the tearful woman whose professional apparatus was her soft heart and a cake of soap. Skepsey has made his peace with you?'

Victor answered: 'Yes, yes; I see what he has been about. We're a mixed lot, all of us—the best! You've noticed, Skepsey has no laugh: however absurd the thing he tells you, not a smile!'

'But you trust his eyes; you look fathoms into them. Captain Dartrey thinks him one of the men most in earnest of any of his country.'

'So Nataly of course thinks the same. And he's a worthy little velocipede, as Fenellan calls him. One wishes Colney had been with us. Only Colney!—pity one can't cut his talons for the space before they grow again.'

Ay, and in the presence of Colney Durance, Victor would not have been so encouraging, half boyishly caressing, with Dudley Sowerby! It was the very manner to sow seed of imitativeness in the girl, devoted as she was to her father. Nataly sighed, foreseeing evil, owning it a superstition, feeling it a certainty. We are easily prophets, sure of being justified, when the cleverness of schemes devoted to

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materiai ends appears most delicately perfect. History, the tales of households, the tombstone, are with us to inspire. In Nataly's bosom, the reproof of her inefficiency for offering counsel where Victor for his soul's sake needed it, was beginning to thunder at whiles as a reproach of unfittingness in his mate, worse than a public denunciation of the sin against Society.

It might be decreed that she and Society were to come to reconcilement. A pain previously thought of, never previously so realized, seized her at her next sight of Nesta. She had not taken in her front mind the contrast of the innocent one condemned to endure the shadow from which the guilty was by a transient ceremony released. Nature could at a push be eloquent to defend the guilty. Not a word of vindicating eloquence rose up to clear the innocent. Nothing that she could do; no devotedness, not any sacrifice, and no treaty of peace, no possible joy to come, nothing could remove the shadow from her child. She dreamed of the succour in eloquence, to charm the ears of chosen juries while a fact spoke over the population, with a relentless rolling out of its one hard word. But eloquence, powerful on her behalf, was dumb when referred to Nesta. It seemed a cruel mystery. How was it permitted by the Merciful Disposer! . . . Nataly's intellect and her reverence clashed. They clash to the end of time if we persist in regarding the Spirit of Life as a remote Externe, who plays the human figures, to bring about this or that issue, instead of being beside us, within us, our breath, if we will; marking on us where at each step we sink to the animal, mount to the divine, we and ours who follow, offspring of body or mind. She was

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in her error, from judgeing of the destiny of man by the fate of individuals. Chiefly her error was, to try to be thinking at all amid the fevered tangle of her sensations.

CHAPTER XVI Accounts for Skepsey's Misconduct, showing how it affected Nataly

A darkness fell upon the troubled woman, and was thicker overhead when her warm blood had drawn her to some acceptance of the philosophy of existence, in a savour of gratification at the prospect of her equal footing with the world while yet she lived. She hated herself for taking pleasure in anything to be bestowed by a world so haphazard, ill-balanced, unjust; she took it bitterly, with such naturalness as not to be aware that it was irony and a poisonous irony moving her to welcome the restorative ceremony because her largeness of person had a greater than common need of the protection.

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That Mausoleum at Dreux may touch to lift us. History pleads for the pride of the great discrowned Family giving her illumination there. The pride is reverently postured, the princely mourning-cloak it wears becomingly braided at the hem with fair designs of our mortal humility in the presence of the vanquisher; against whom, acknowledgeing a visible conquest of the dust, it sustains a placid contention in coloured glass and marbles.

Mademoiselle de Seilles, a fervid Orleanist, was

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thanked for having advised the curvature of the route homeward to visit 'the spot of so impressive a monument': as it was phrased by the Rev. Septimus Barmby; whose exposition to Nesta of the beautiful stained-glass pictures of incidents in the life of the crusading St. Louis, was toned to be likewise impressive:—Colney Durance not being at hand to bewail the pathos of his exhaustless 'whacking of the platitudes'; which still retain their tender parts, but cry unheard when there is no cynic near. Mr. Barmby laid-on solemnly.

Professional devoutness is deemed more righteous on such occasions than poetic fire. It robes us in the cloak of the place, as at a funeral. Generally, Mr. Barmby found, and justly, that it is in superior estimation among his countrymen of all classes. They are shown by example how to look, think, speak; what to do. Poets are disturbing; they cannot be comfortably imitated, they are unsafe, not certainly the metal, unless you have Laureates, entitled to speak by their pay and decorations; and these are but one at a time, and a quotation may remind us of a parody, to convulse the sacred dome! Established plain prose officials do better for our English. The audience moved round with heads of undertakers.

Victor called to recollection Fenellan's 'Rev. Glendoveer' while Mr. Barmby pursued his discourse, uninterrupted by tripping wags. And those who have schemes, as well as those who are startled by the criticism in laughter to discover, that they have cause for shunning it, rejoice when wits are absent. Mr. Sowerby and Nesta interchanged a comment on Mr. Barmby's remarks: *The Fate of Princes! The*

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Paths of Glory! St. Louis was a very distant Roman Catholic monarch; and the young gentleman of Evangelical education could admire him as a Crusader. St. Louis was for Nesta a figure in the rich hues of royal Saintship softened to homeliness by tears. She doated on a royalty crowned with the Saint's halo, that swam down to us to lift us through holy human showers. She listened to Mr. Barmby, hearing few sentences, lending his eloquence all she felt: he rolled forth notes of a minster organ, accordant with the devotional service she was holding mutely. Mademoiselle upon St. Louis: 'Worthy to be named King of Kings!' swept her to a fount of thoughts, where the thoughts are not yet shaped, are yet in the breast of the mother emotions. Louise de Seilles had prepared her to be strangely and deeply moved. The girl had a heart of many strings, of high pitch, open to be musical to simplest wandering airs or to the gales. This crypt of the recumbent sculptured figures and the coloured series of acts in the passage of the crowned Saint thrilled her as with sight of flame on an altar-piece of History. But this King in the lines of the Crucifixion leading, gave her a lesson of life, not a message from death. With such a King, there would be union of the old order and the new, cessation to political turmoil: Radicalism, Socialism, all the monster names of things with heads agape in these our days to gobble-up the venerable, obliterate the beautiful, leave a stoniness of floods where field and garden were, would be appeased, transfigured. She hoped, she prayed for that glorious leader's advent.

On one subject, conceived by her only of late, and not intelligibly, not communicably: a subject thickly

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veiled; one which struck at her through her sex and must, she thought, ever be unnamed (the ardent young creature saw it as a very thing torn by the winds to show hideous gleams of a body rageing with fire behind the veil): on this one subject, her hopes and prayers were dumb in her bosom. It signified shame. She knew not the how, for she had no power to contemplate it: there was a torment of earth and a writhing of lurid dust-clouds about it at a glimpse. But if the new crusading Hero were to come attacking *that*—if some born prince nobly man would head the world to take away the withering scarlet from the face of women, she felt she could kiss the print of his feet upon the ground. Meanwhile she had enjoyment of her plunge into the inmost forest-well of mediæval imaginativeness, where youthful minds of good aspiration through their obscurities find much akin to them.

She had an eye for little Skepsey too: unaware that these French Princes had hurried him off to Agincourt, for another encounter with them and the old result—poor dear gentlemen, with whom we do so wish to be friendly! What amused her was, his evident fatigue in undergoing the slow parade, and sheer deference to his betters, as to the signification of a holiday on arrested legs. Dudley Sowerby's attention to him, in elucidating the scenes with historical scraps, greatly pleased her. The Rev. Septimus of course occupied her chiefly.

Mademoiselle was always near, to receive his repeated expressions of gratitude for the route she had counselled. Without personal objections to a well-meaning orderly man, whose pardonable error it was

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to be aiming too considerably higher than his head, she did but show him the voluble muteness of a Frenchwoman's closed lips; not a smile at all, and certainly no sign of hostility; when bowing to his reiterated compliment in the sentence of French. Mr. Barmby had noticed (and a strong sentiment rendered him observant, unwontedly) a similar alert immobility of her lips, indicating foreign notions of this kind or that, in England: an all but imperceptible shortening or loss of corners at the mouth, upon mention of marriages of his clergy: particularly once, at his reading of a lengthy report in a newspaper of a Wedding Ceremony involving his favourite Bishop for bridegroom: a report to make one glow like Hymen rollicking the Torch after draining the bumper to the flying slipper. He remembered the look, and how it seemed to intensify on the slumbering features, at a statement, that his Bishop was a widower, entering into nuptials in his fifty-fourth year. Why not? But we ask it of Heaven and Man, why not? Mademoiselle was pleasant: she was young or youngish; her own clergy were celibates, and—no, he could not argue the matter with a young or youngish person of her sex. Could it be a reasonable woman—a woman!—who disapproved the holy nuptials of the pastors of the flocks? But we are forbidden to imagine the conducting of an argument thereon with a lady:—Luther . . . but we are not in Luther's time:—Nature . . . no, nor can there possibly be allusions to Nature. Mr. Barmby wondered at Protestant parents taking a Papistical governess for their young flower of English womanhood. However, she venerated St. Louis; he cordially also;

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there they met; and he admitted, that she had, for a Frenchwoman, a handsome face, and besides an agreeably artificial ingenuousness in the looks which could be so politely dubious as to appear only dubiously adverse.

The spell upon Nesta was not blown away on English ground; and when her father and mother were comparing their impressions, she could not but keep guard over the deeper among her own. At the Château de Gisors, leftward off Vernon on Seine, it had been one of romance and wonderment, with inquisitive historic soundings of her knowledge and mademoiselle's, a reverence for the prisoner's patient holy work, and picturings of his watchful waiting daily, Nail in hand, for the heaven-sent sunlight on the circular dungeon-wall through the slits of the meurtrières. But the Mausoleum at Dreux spake religiously; it enfolded Mr. Barmby, his voice re-edified it. The fact that he had discoursed there, though not a word of the discourse was remembered, allied him to the spirit of a day rather increasing in sacredness as it receded and left her less the possessor of it, more the worshipper.

Mademoiselle had to say to herself: 'Impossible!' after seeing the drift of her dear Nesta's eyes in the wake of the colossal English clergyman. She fed her incredulousness indignantly on the evidence confounding it. Nataly was aware of unusual intonations, treble-stressed, in the *Bethesda* and the *Galilee* of Mr. Barmby on Concert evenings: as it were, the towering wood-work of the cathedral organ in quake under emission of its multitudinous outroar. The 'Which?' of the Rev. Septimus, addressed to Nesta,

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when song was demanded of him; and her 'Either'; and his gentle hesitation, upon a gaze at her for the directing choice, could not be unnoticed by women.

Did he know a certain thing?—and dream of urging the suit, as an indulgent skipper of parental pages?—

Such haunting interrogations were the conspirators' daggers out at any instant, or leaping in sheath, against Nataly's peace of mind. But she trusted her girl's laughing side to rectify any little sentimental overbalancing. She left the ground where maternal meditations are serious, at an image of Mr. Barmby knocking at Nesta's heart as a lover. Was it worth inquiry?

A feminine look was trailed across the eyes of mademoiselle, with mention of Mr. Barmby's name.

Mademoiselle rippled her shoulders. 'We are at present much enamoured of *Bethesda*.'

That watchfullest showing no alarm, the absurdity of the suspicion smothered it.

Nataly had moreover to receive startling new guests: Lady Rodwell Blachington: Mrs. Fanning, wife of the General: young Mrs. Blathenoy, wife of the great bill-broker: ladies of Wrensham and about. And it was a tasking of her energies equal to the buffetting of recurrent waves on deep sea. The ladies were eager for her entry into Lakelands. She heard that Victor had appointed Lady Blachington's third son to the coveted post of clerk in the Indian house of Inchling and Radnor. These are the deluge days when even aristocracy will cry blessings on the man who procures a commercial appointment for one of its younger sons offended and rebutted by the barrier of Examinations for the Civil Service. 'To have our Adolphus under Mr. Victor Radnor's protection, is a step!' Lady

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Blachington said. Nataly was in an atmosphere of hints and revealings. There were City Dinners, to which one or other of the residents about Lakelands had been taken before he sat at Victor's London table. He was already winning his way, apparently without effort, to be the popular man of that neighbourhood. A subterranean tide or a slipping of earth itself seemed bearing her on. She had his promise indeed, that he would not ask of her to enter Lakelands until the day of his freedom had risen; but though she could trust to his word, the heart of the word went out of it when she heard herself thanked by Lady Blachington (who could so well excuse her at such a time of occupation for not returning her call, that she called in a friendly way a second time, warmly to thank her) for throwing open the Concert room at Lakelands in August, to an Entertainment in assistance of the funds for the purpose of erecting an East of London Clubhouse, where the children of the poor by day could play, and their parents pass a disengaged evening. Doubtless a worthy Charity. Nataly was alive to the duties of wealth. Had it been simply a demand for a donation, she would not have shown that momentary pucker of the brows, which Lady Blachington read as a contrast with the generous vivacity of the husband.

Nataly read a leaf of her fate in this announcement. Nay, she beheld herself as the outer world vexedly beholds a creature swung along to the doing of things against the better mind. An outer world is thoughtless of situations which prepare us to meet the objectionable with a will benumbed;—if we do not, as does that outer world, belong to the party of the readily heroical. She scourged her weakness: and the in-

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timation of the truth stood over her, more than ever manifest, that the deficiency affecting her character lay in her want of language. A tongue to speak and contend, would have helped her to carve a clearer way. But then again, the tongue to speak must be one which could reproach, and strike at errors; fence, and continually summon resources to engage the electrical vitality of a man like Victor. It was an exultation of their life together, a mark of its holiness for them both, that they had never breathed a reproach upon one another. She dropped away from ideas of remonstrance; faintly seeing, in her sigh of submission, that the deficiency affecting her character would have been supplied by a greater force of character, pressing either to speech or acts. The confession of a fated inevitable in the mind, is weakness prostrate. She knew it: but she could point to the manner of man she was matched with; and it was not a poor excuse.

Mr. Barmby, she thought, deserved her gratitude in some degree for stepping between Mr. Sowerby and Nesta. The girl not having inclinations, and the young gentleman being devoid of stratagem, they were easily kept from the dangerous count of two.

Mademoiselle would have said, that the shepherd also had rarely if ever a minute quite alone with her lamb. Incredulously she perceived signs of a shock. The secret following the signs was betrayed by Nesta in return for a tender grasp of hands and a droll flutter of eyelids. Out it came, on a nod first; then a dreary mention of a date, and an incident, to bring it nearer to comprehension. Mr. Barmby—and decide who will whether it is that Love was made to elude or that

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curates impelled by his fires are subtle as æther—had outwitted French watchfulness by stealing minutes enough on a day at Lakelands to declare himself. And no wonder the girl looked so forlorn: he had shivered her mediæval forest-palace of illuminated glass, to leave her standing like a mountain hind, that sniffs the tainted gale off the crag of her first quick leap from hounds; her instincts alarmed, instead of rich imagination colouring and fostering.

She had no memory for his words; so, and truly, she told her Louise: meaning that she had only a spiceless memory; especially for the word *love* in her ears from the mouth of a man.

There had been a dream of it; with the life-awakening marvel it would be, the humbleness it would bring to her soul beneath the golden clothing of her body: one of those faint formless dreams, which are as the bend of grasses to the breath of a still twilight. She lived too spiritedly to hang on any dream; and had moreover a muffled dread—shadow-sister to the virginal desire—of this one, as of a fateful power that might drag her down, disorder, discolour. But now she had heard it: the word, the very word itself! in her own ears! addressed to her! in a man's voice! The first utterance had been heard, and it was over; the chapter of the book of bulky promise of the splendours and mysteries;—the shimmering woods and bushy glades, and the descent of the shape celestial, and the recognition—the mutual cry of affinity; and overhead the crimson outrolling of the flag of beneficent enterprises hand in hand, all was at an end. These, then, are the deceptions our elders tell of! That masculine voice should herald a new world to

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the maiden. The voice she had heard did but rock to ruin the world she had been living in.

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Mademoiselle prudently forbore from satirical remarks on his person or on his conduct. Nesta had nothing to defend: she walked in a bald waste.

'Can I have been guilty of leading him to think . . .?' she said, in a tone that writhed, at a second discussion of this hapless affair.

'They choose to think,' mademoiselle replied. 'It is he or another. My dear and dearest, you have entered the field where shots fly thick, as they do to soldiers in battle; and it is neither your fault nor any one's, if you are hit.'

Nesta gazed at her, with a shy supplicating cry of 'Louise.'

Mademoiselle immediately answered the tone of entreaty. 'Has it happened to me? I am of the age of eight and twenty; passable, to look at: yes, my dear, I have gone through it. To spare you the questions tormenting you, I will tell you, that perhaps our experience of our feelings comes nigh on a kind of resemblance. The first gentleman who did me the honour to inform me of his passion, was a hunchback.'

Nesta cried 'Oh!' in a veritable pang of sympathy, and clapped hands to her ears, to shut out Mr. Barmby's boom of the terrific word attacking Louise from that deformed one.

Her disillusionment became of the sort which hears derision. A girl of quick blood and active though unregulated intellect, she caught at the comic of young women's hopes and experiences, in her fear of it.

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'My own precious poor dear Louise! what injustice there is in the world for one like my Louise to have a hunchback to be the first . . .!'

'But, my dear, it did me no harm.'

'But if it had been known!'

'But it was known!'

Nesta controlled a shuddering: 'It is the knowledge of it in ourselves—that it has ever happened;—you dear Louise, who deserve so much better! And one asks—Oh, why are we not left in peace! And do look at the objects it makes of us!' Mademoiselle could see, that the girl's desperation had got hold of her humour for a life-buoy. 'It is really worse to have it unknown—when you are compelled to be his partner in sharing the secret, and feel as if it were a dreadful doll you conceal for fear that everybody will laugh at its face.'

She resumed her seriousness: 'I find it so hard to be vexed with him and really really like him. For he is a good man; but he will not let one shake him off. He distresses: because we can't quite meet as we did. Last Wednesday Concert evening, he kept away; and I am annoyed that I was glad.'

'Moths have to pass through showers, and keep their pretty patterns from damage as best they can,' said mademoiselle.

Nesta transformed herself into a disciple of Philosophy on the spot. 'Yes, all these feelings of ours are moth-dust! One feels them. I suppose they pass. They must. But tell me, Louise, dear soul, was your poor dear good little afflicted suitor—was he kindly pitied?'

'Conformably with the regulations prescribed to

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young damsels who are in request to surrender the custody of their hands. It is easy to commit a dangerous excess in the dispensing of that article they call pity of them.'

'And he—did he?—vowed to you he could not take No for an answer?'

At this ingenuous question, woefully uttered, mademoiselle was pricked to smile pointedly. Nesta had a tooth on her underlip. Then, shaking vapours to the winds, she said: 'It is an honour, to be asked; and we cannot be expected to consent. So I shall wear through it.—Only I do wish that Mr. Fenellan would not call him The Inchcape Bell!' She murmured this to herself.

Mr. Barmby was absent for two weeks. 'Can anything have offended him?' Victor inquired, in some consternation, appreciating the man's worth, and the grand basso he was; together with the need for him at the Lakelands Concert in August.

Nataly wrote Mr. Barmby a direct invitation. She had no reply. Her speculations were cut short by Victor, who handed her a brief note addressed to him and signed by the Rev. Septimus, petitioning for a private interview.

The formality of the request incensed Victor. 'Now, dear love, you see Colney's meaning, when he says, there are *people who have no intimacy in them*. Here's a man who visits me regularly once a week or more, has been familiar for years—four, at least; and he wants to speak to me, and must obtain the "privilege" by special appointment! What can be the meaning of it?'

'You will hear to-morrow afternoon,' Nataly said,

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seeing one paved way to the meaning—a too likely meaning.

'He hasn't been . . . nothing about Fredi, surely!'

'I have had no information.'

'Impossible! Barmby has good sense; Bottesini can't intend to come scraping on that string. But we won't lose him; he's one of us. Barmby counts for more at a Charity Concert than all the catalogue, and particularly in the country. But he's an excellent fellow—eh?'

'That he is,' Nataly agreed.

Victor despatched a cheerful curt consent to see Mr. Barmby privately on the late afternoon of the day to follow.

Nesta, returning home from the park at that hour of the interview, ignorant of Mr. Barmby's purpose though she was, had her fires extinguished by the rolling roar of curfew along the hall-passage, out of the library.

CHAPTER XVIII

Suitors for the Hand of Nesta Victoria

When, upon the well-known quest, the delightful singer Orpheus took that downward way, coming in sight of old Cerberus centiceps, he astutely feigned inattention to the hostile appearances of the multiple beast, and with a wave of his plectrum over the responsive lyre, he at the stroke raised voice. This much you know. It may be communicated to you, that there was then beheld the most singular spectacle ever exhibited on the dizzy line of division between

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the living and the dead. For those unaccustomed musical tones in the last thin whiff of our sustaining air were so smartingly persuasive as to pierce to the vitals of the faithful Old Dog before his offended sentiments had leisure to rouse their heads against a beggar of a mortal. The terrible sugariness which poured into him worked like venom to cause an encounter and a wrestling: his battery of jaws expressed it. They gaped. At the same time, his eyeballs gave up. All the Dog, that would have barked the breathing intruder an hundredfold back to earth, was one compulsory centurion yawn. Tears, issue of the frightful internal wedding of the dulcet and the sour (a ravishing rather of the latter by the former), rolled off his muzzles.

Now, if you are not for insisting that a magnificent simile shall be composed of exactly the like notes in another octave, you will catch the fine flavour of analogy and be wafted in a beat of wings across the scene of the application of the Rev. Septimus Barmby to Mr. Victor Radnor, that he might enter the house in the guise of suitor for the hand of Nesta Victoria. It is the excelling merit of similes and metaphors to spring us to vault over gaps and thickets and dreary places. But, as with the visits of Immortals, we must be ready to receive them. Beware, moreover, of examining them too scrupulously: they have a trick of wearing to vapour if closely scanned. Let it be gratefully for their aid.

So far the comparison is absolute, that Mr. Barmby *passed*: he was at liberty to pursue his quest.

Victor could not explain how he had been brought

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to grant it. He was at pains to conceal the bewilderment Mr. Barmby had cast on him, and make Nataly see the smallness of the grant:—both of them were unwilling to lose Barmby; there was not the slightest fear about Fredi, he said; and why should not poor Barmby have his chance with the others in the race! —and his Nataly knew that he hated to speak unkindly: he could cry the negative like a crack of thunder in the City. But such matters as these! and a man pleading merely for the right to see the girl!—and pleading in a tone . . . 'I assure you, my love, he touched chords.'

'Did he allude to advantages in the alliance with him?' Nataly asked smoothly.

'His passion—nothing else. Candid enough. And he had a tone—he *has* a tone, you know. It's not what he said. Some allusion to belief in a favourable opinion of him . . . encouragement . . . on the part of the mama. She would have him travelling with us! I foresaw it.'

'You were astonished when it came.'

'We always are.'

Victor taunted her softly with having encouraged Mr. Barmby.

She had thought in her heart—not seriously; on a sigh of despondency—that Mr. Barmby espousing the girl would smooth a troubled prospect: and a present resentment at her weakness rendered her shrewd to detect Victor's cunning to cover his own: a thing imaginable of him previously in sentimental matters, yet never accurately and so legibly printed on her mind. It did not draw her to read him with a novel familiarity; it drew her to be more sensible of fore-

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gone intimations of the man he was—irresistible in attack, not impregnably defensive. Nor did he seem in this instance humanely considerate: if mademoiselle's estimate of the mind of the girl was not wrong, then Mr. Barmby's position would be both a ridiculous and a cruel one. She had some silly final idea that the poor man might now serve permanently to check the more dreaded applicant: a proof that her ordinary reflectiveness was blunted.

Nataly acknowledged, after rallying Victor for coming to have his weakness condoned, a justice in his counter-accusation, of a loss of her natural cheerfulness, and promised amendment, with a steely smile, that his lips mimicked fondly; and her smile softened. To strengthen the dear soul's hopes, he spoke, as one who had received the latest information, of Dr. Themison and surgeons;—little conscious of the tragic depths he struck or of the burden he gave her heart to bear. Her look alarmed him. She seemed to be hugging herself up to the tingling scalp, and was in a moment marble to sight and touch. She looked like the old engravings of martyrs taking the bite of the jaws of flame at the stake.

He held her embraced, feeling her body as if it were in the awful grip of fingers from the outside of life.

The seizure was over before it could be called ominous. When it was once over, and she had smiled again and rebuked him for excessive anxiety, his apprehensions no longer troubled him, but subsided sensationally in wrath at the crippled woman who would not obey the dictate of her ailments instantly to perish and spare this dear one annoyance.

Subsequently, later than usual, he performed his

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usual mental penance for it. In consequence, the wrath, and the wish, and the penitence, haunted him, each swelling to possession of him in turn; until they united to head a plunge into retrospects; which led to his reviewing the army of charges against Mrs. Burman.

And of this he grew ashamed, attributing it to the morbid indulgence in reflection: a disease never afflicting him anterior to the stupid fall on London Bridge. He rubbed instinctively for the punctilio-bump, and could cheat his fancy to think a remainder of it there, just below, half an inch to the right of, the spot where a phrenologist, invited by Nataly in old days, had marked philo-progenitiveness on his capacious and enviable cerebrum. He knew well it was a fancy. But it was a fact also, that since the day of the fall (never, save in merest glimpses, before that day), he had taken to look behind him, as though an eye had been knocked in the back of his head.

Then, was that day of the announcement of Lakelands to Nataly, to be accounted a gloomy day? He would not have it so.

She was happily occupied with her purchases of furniture, Fredi with her singing lessons, and he with his business; a grasp of many ribands, reining-in or letting loose; always enjoyable in the act. Recently only had he known when at home, a relaxation, a positive pleasure in looking forward to the hours of the City office. This was odd, but so it was; and looking homeward from the City, he had a sense of disappointment when it was not Concert evening. The Cormyns, the Yatts, and Priscilla Graves, and

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Pempton, foolish fellow, and that bothering Barmby, and Peridon and Catkin, were the lineing of his nest. Well, and so they had been before Lakelands rose. What had induced! . . . he suddenly felt foreign to himself. The shrouded figure of his lost Idea on London Bridge went by.

A peep into the folds of the shroud was granted him:—Is it a truth, that if we are great owners of money, we are so swoln with a force not native to us, as to be precipitated into acts the downright contrary of our tastes?

He inquired it of his tastes, which have the bad habit of unmeasured phrasing when they are displeased, and so they yield no rational answer. Still he gave heed to violent extraneous harpings against money. Epigrams of Colney's; abuse of it and the owners of it by Socialist orators reported in some newspaper corner; had him by the ears.

They ceased in the presence of Lady Grace Halley, who entered his office to tell him she was leaving town for Whinfold, her husband's family-seat, where the dear man lay in evil case. She signified her resignation to the decrees from above, saying generously:

'You look troubled, my friend. Any bad City news?'

'I look troubled?' Victor said laughing, and bethought him of what the trouble might be. 'City news would not cause the look. Ah, yes;—I was talking in the street to a friend of mine on horseback the other day, and he kept noticing his horse's queer starts. We spied half a dozen children in the gutter, at the tail of the horse, one of them plucking at a hair. "Please, sir, may I have a hair out of your

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horse's tail?" said the mite. We patted the poor horse that grew a tail for urchins to pluck at. Men come to the fathers about their girls. It's my belief that mothers more easily say no. If they learn the word as maids, you'll say! However, there's no fear about my girl. Fredi's hard to snare. And what brings you Cityward?'

'I want to know whether I shall do right in selling out of the Tiddler mine.'

'You have multiplied your investment by ten.'

'If it had been thousands!'

'Clearly, you sell; always jump out of a mounted mine, unless you're at the bottom of it.'

'There are City-articles against the mine this morning—or I should have been on my way to Whinfold at this moment. The shares are lower.'

'The merry boys are at work to bring your balloon to the ground, that you may quit it for them to ascend. Tiddler has enemies, like the best of mines: or they may be named lovers, if you like. And mines that have gone up, go down for a while before they rise again; it's an affair of undulations; rocket mines are not so healthy. The stories are false, for the time. I had the latest from Dartrey Fenellan yesterday. He's here next month, some time in August.'

'He is married, is he not?'

'Was.'

Victor's brevity sounded oddly to Lady Grace.

'Is he not a soldier?' she said.

'Soldiers and parsons!' Victor interjected.

Now she saw. She understood the portent of Mr. Barmby's hovering offer of the choice of songs, and the recent tremulousness of the welling *Bethesda*.

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But she had come about her own business; and after remarking, that when there is a prize there must be competition, or England will have to lower her flag, she declared her resolve to stick to Tiddler, exclaiming: 'It 's only in mines that twenty times the stake is not a dream of the past!'

'The Riviera green field on the rock is always open to you,' said Victor.

She put out her hand to be taken. 'Not if you back me here. It really is not gambling when yours is the counsel I follow. And if I 'm to be a widow, I shall have to lean on a friend, gifted like you. I love adventure, danger;—well, if we two are in it; just to see my captain in a storm. And if the worst happens, we go down together. It 's the detestation of our deadly humdrum of modern life; some inherited love of fighting.'

'Say, brandy.'

'Does not Mr. Durance accuse you of an addiction to the brandy novel?'

'Colney may call it what he pleases. If I read fiction, let it be fiction; airier than hard fact. If I see a ballet, my troop of short skirts must not go stepping like pavement policemen. I can't read dull analytical stuff or "stylists" when I want action—if I 'm to give my mind to a story. I can supply the reflections. I 'm English—if Colney 's right in saying we always come round to the story with the streak of supernaturalism. I don't ask for bloodshed: that 's what his "brandy" means.'

'But Mr. Durance is right, we require a shedding; I confess I expect it where there 's love; it 's part of the balance, and justifies one's excitement. How

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otherwise do you get any real crisis? I must read and live something unlike this flat life around us.'

'There 's the Adam life and the Macadam life, Fenellan says. Pass it in books, but in life we can have quite enough excitement coming out of our thoughts. No brandy there! And no fine name for personal predilections or things done in domino!' Victor said, with his very pleasant face, pressing her hand, to keep the act of long holding it in countenance and bring it to a well-punctuated conclusion: thinking involuntarily of the other fair woman, whose hand was his, and who betrayed a beaten visage despite—or with that poor kind of—trust in her captain. But the thought was not guilty of drawing comparisons. 'This is one that I could trust, as captain or mate,' he pressed the hand again before dropping it.

'You judge entirely by the surface, if you take me for a shifty person at the trial,' said Lady Grace.

Skepsey entered the room with one of his packets, and she was reminded of trains and husbands.

She left Victor uncomfortably ruffled: and how? for she had none of the physical charms appealing peculiarly to the man who was taken with grandeur of shape. She belonged rather to the description physically distasteful to him.

It is a critical comment on a civilization carelessly distilled from the jealous East, when visits of fair women to City offices can have this effect. If the sexes are separated for an hour, the place where one is excluded or not common to see, becomes inflammable to that appearing spark. *He* does outrage to a *bona Dea: she* to the monasticism of the Court of

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Law: and he and she awaken unhallowed emotions. Supposing, however, that western men were to de-orientalize their gleeful notions of her, and dis-Turk themselves by inviting the woman's voluble tongue to sisterly occupation there in the midst of the pleading Court, as in the domestic circle: very soon would her eyes be harmless:—unless directed upon us with intent.

That is the burning core of the great Question, our Armageddon in Morality: Is she moral? Does she mean to be harmless? Is she not untamable Old Nature? And when once on an equal footing with her lordly half, would not the spangled beauty, in a turn, like the realistic transformation-trick of a pantomime, show herself to be that wanton old thing—the empress of disorderliness? You have to recollect, as the Conservative acutely suggests, that her timidities, at present urging her to support Establishments, pertain to her state of dependence. The party views of Conservatism are, must be, founded, we should remember, on an intimate acquaintance with her in the situations where she is almost unrestrictedly free and her laughter rings to confirm the sentences of classical authors and Eastern sages. Conservatives know what they are about when they refuse to fling the last lattice of an ancient harem open to air and sun—the brutal dispersers of mystery, which would despoil an ankle of its flying wink.

Victor's opinions were those of the entrenched majority; objecting to the occult power of women, as we have the women now, while legislating to maintain them so; and forbidding a step to a desperately wicked female world lest the step should be to

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wickeder. His opinions were in the background, rarely stirred; but the lady had brought them forward; and he fretted at his restlessness, vexed that it should be due to the intrusion of the sex instead of to the charms of the individual. No sting of the sort had bothered him, he called to mind, on board the Channel boat—nothing to speak of. 'Why does she come here! Why didn't she go to her husband! She gets into the City scramble blindfold, and catches at the nearest hand to help her out! Nice woman enough.' Yes, but he was annoyed with her for springing sensations that ran altogether heartless to the object, at the same time that they were disloyal to the dear woman their natural divinity. And between him and that dear woman, since the communication made by Skepsey in the town of Dreux, nightly the dividing spirit of Mrs. Burman lay: cold as a corpse. They both felt her there. They kissed coldly, pressed a hand, said good night.

Next afternoon the announcement by Skepsey of the Hon. Dudley Sowerby, surprised Victor's eyebrows at least, and caused him genially to review the visit of Lady Grace.

Whether or not Colney Durance drew his description of a sunken nobility from the 'sick falcon' distinguishing the handsome features of Mr. Sowerby, that beaked invalid was particularly noticeable to Victor during the statement of his case, although the young gentleman was far from being one, in Colney's words, to enliven the condition of domestic fowl with an hereditary turn for 'preying'; eminently the reverse; he was of good moral repute, a worker, a commendable citizen. But there was the obligation

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upon him to speak—it is expected in such cases, if only as a formality—of his 'love': hard to do even in view and near to the damsel's reddening cheeks: it perplexed him. He dropped a veil on the bashful topic; his tone was the same as when he reverted to the material points; his present income, his position in the great Bank of Shotts and Co., his prospects, the health of the heir to the Cantor earldom. He considered that he spoke to a member of the City merchants, whose preference for the plain positive, upon the question of an alliance between families by marriage, lends them for once a resemblance to lords. When a person is not read by character, the position or profession is called on to supply raised print for the finger-ends to spell.

Hard on poor Fredi! was Victor's thought behind the smile he bent on this bald Cupid. She deserved a more poetical lover! His paternal sympathies for the girl besought in love, revived his past feelings as a wooer; nothing but a dread of the influence of Mr. Barmby's toned eloquence upon the girl, after her listening to Dudley Sowerby's addresses, checked his contempt for the latter. He could not despise the suitor he sided with against another and seemingly now a more dangerous. Unable quite to repress the sentiment, he proceeded immediately to put it to his uses. For we have no need to be scrupulously formal and precise in the exposition of circumstances to a fellow who may thank the stars if such a girl condescends to give him a hearing. He had this idea through the conception of his girl's generosity. And furthermore, the cognizant eye of a Lucretian Alma Mater having seat so strongly in Victor, demanded as

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a right an effusion of the promising amorous graces on the part of the acceptable applicant to the post of husband of that peerless. These being absent, evidently non-existent, it seemed sufficient for the present, after the fashion of the young gentleman, to capitulate the few material matters briefly.

They were dotted along with a fine disregard of the stateliness of the sum to be settled on Nesta Victoria, and with a distant but burning wish all the while, that the suitor had been one to touch his heart and open it, inspiriting it—as could have been done—to disclose for good and all the things utterable. Victor loved clear honesty, as he loved light: and though he hated to be accused of not showing a clean face in the light, he would have been moved and lifted to confess to a spot by the touch at his heart. Dudley Sowerby's deficiencies, however, were outweighed by the palpable advantages of his birth, his prospects, and his good repute for conduct; add thereto his gentlemanly manners. Victor sighed again over his poor Fredi; and in telling Mr. Sowerby that the choice must be left to her, he had the regrets of a man aware of his persuasive arts and how they would be used, to think that he was actually making the choice.

Observe how fatefully he who has a scheme is the engine of it; he is no longer the man of his tastes or of his principles; he is on a line of rails for a terminus; and he may cast languishing eyes across waysides to right and left, he has doomed himself to proceed, with a self-devouring hunger for the half desired; probably manhood gone at the embrace of it. This may be or not, but Nature has decreed to him the forfeit of pleasure. She bids us count the passage of a sober

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day for the service of the morrow; that is her system; and she would have us adopt it, to keep in us the keen edge for cutting, which is the guarantee of enjoyment: doing otherwise, we lose ourselves in one or other of the furious matrix instincts; we are blunt to all else.

Young Dudley fully agreed that the choice must be with Miss Radnor; he alluded to her virtues, her accomplishments. He was waxing to fervidness. He said he must expect competitors; adding, on a start, that he was to say, from his mother, she, in the case of an intention to present Miss Radnor at Court . . .

Victor waved hand for a finish, looking as though his head had come out of hot water. He sacrificed Royalty to his necessities, under a kind of sneer at its functions: 'Court! my girl? But the arduous duties are over for the season. We are a democratic people retaining the seductions of monarchy, as a friend says; and of course a girl may like to count among the flowers of the kingdom for a day, in the list of Court presentations; no harm. Only there 's plenty of time . . . very young girls have their heads turned—though I don't say, don't imagine, my girl would. By and by perhaps.'

Dudley was ushered into Mr. Inchling's room and introduced to the figure-head of the Firm of Inchling, Pennergate, and Radnor: a respectable City merchant indeed, whom Dudley could read-off in a glimpse of the downright contrast to his partner. He had heard casual remarks on the respectable City of London merchant from Colney Durance. A short analytical gaze at him, helped to an estimate of the powers of the man who kept him up. Mr. Inchling was a florid City-feaster, descendant of a line of City merchants,

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having features for a wife to identify; as drovers, they tell us, can single one from another of their round-bellied beasts. Formerly the leader of the Firm, he was now, after dreary fits of restiveness, kickings, false prophecies of ruin, Victor's obedient cart-horse. He sighed in set terms for the old days of the Firm, when, like trouts in the current, the Firm had only to gape for shoals of good things to fatten it: a tale of English prosperity in quiescence; narrated interjectorily among the by-ways of the City, and wanting only metre to make it our national Poem.

Mr. Inchling did not deny that grand mangers of golden oats were still somehow constantly allotted to him. His wife believed in Victor, and deemed the loss of the balancing Pennergate a gain. Since that lamentable loss, Mr. Inchling, under the irony of circumstances the Tory of Commerce, had trotted and galioped whither driven, racing like mad against his will and the rival nations now in the field to force the pace; a name for enterprise; the close commercial connection of a man who speculated—who, to put it plainly, lived on his wits; hurried onward and onward; always doubting, munching, grumbling at satisfaction, in perplexity of the gratitude which is apprehensive of black Nemesis at a turn of the road, to confound so wild a whip as Victor Radnor. He had never forgiven the youth's venture in India of an enormous purchase of Cotton many years back, and which he had repudiated, though not his share of the hundreds of thousands realized before the refusal to ratify the bargain had come to Victor. Mr. Inchling dated his first indigestion from that disquieting period. He assented to the praise of Victor's

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genius, admitting benefits; his heart refused to pardon, and consequently his head wholly to trust, the man who robbed him of his quondam comfortable feeling of security. And if you will imagine the sprite of the aggregate English Taxpayer personifying Steam as the malignant who has despoiled him of the blessed Safety-Assurance he once had from his God Neptune against invaders, you will comprehend the state of Mr. Inchling's mind in regard to his terrific and bountiful, but very disturbing partner.

He thanked heaven to his wife often, that he had nothing to do with North American or South American mines and pastures or with South Africa and gold and diamonds: and a wife must sometimes listen, mastering her inward comparisons. Dr. Schlesien had met and meditated on this example of the island energy. Mr. Inchling was not permitted by his wife to be much the guest of the Radnor household, because of the frequent meeting there with Colney Durance; Colney's humour for satire being instantly in bristle at sight of his representative of English City merchants: 'over whom,' as he wrote of the venerable body, 'the disciplined and instructed Germans not deviously march; whom acute and adventurous Americans, with half a cock of the eye in passing, compassionately outstrip.' He and Dr. Schlesien agreed upon Mr. Inchling. Meantime the latter gentleman did his part at the tables of the wealthier City Companies, and retained his appearance of health; he was beginning to think, upon a calculation of the increased treasures of those Companies and the country, that we, the Taxpayer, ought not to leave it altogether to Providence to

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defend them; notwithstanding the watchful care of us hitherto shown by our briny Providence, to save us from anxiety and expense. But there are, he said, 'difficulties'; and the very word could stop him, as commonly when our difficulty lies in the exercise of thinking.

Victor's African room, containing large wall-maps of auriferous regions, was inspected; and another, where clerks were busy over miscellaneous Continents. Dudley Sowerby hoped he might win the maiden.

He and Victor walked in company Westward. The shop of Boyle and Luckwort, chemists, was not passed on this occasion. Dudley grieved that he had to be absent from the next Concert for practice, owing to his engagement to his mother to go down to the family seat near Tunbridge Wells. Victor mentioned his relatives, the Duvidney maiden ladies, residing near the Wells. They measured the distance between Cronidge and Moorsedge, the two houses, as for half an hour on horseback.

Nesta told her father at home that the pair of them had been observed confidentially arm in arm, and conversing so profoundly.

'Who, do you think, was the topic?' Victor asked.

She would not chase the little blue butterfly of a guess.

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There is at times in the hearts of all men of active life a vivid wild moment or two of dramatic dialogue between the veteran antagonists, Nature and Circumstance, when they, whose business it should be to be joyfully one, furiously split; and the Dame is up with her shrillest querulousness to inquire of her offspring, for the distinct original motive of his conduct. Why did he bring her to such a pass! And what is the gain? If he be not an alienated issue of the great Mother, he will strongly incline to her view, that he put himself into harness to join with a machine going the dead contrary way of her welfare; and thereby wrote himself donkey, for his present reading. Soldiers, heroes, even the braided, even the wearers of the gay cock's feathers, who get the honours and the pocket-pieces, know the moment of her electrical eloquence. They have no answer for her, save an index at the machine pushing them on yet farther under the enemy's line of fire, where they pluck the golden wreath or the livid, and in either case listen no more. They glorify her topping wisdom while on the march to confound it. She is wise in her way. But it is asked by the disputant, If we had followed her exclusively, how far should we have travelled

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from our starting-point? We of the world and its prizes and duties must do her an injury to make her tongue musical to us, and her argument worthy of attention. So it seems. How to keep the proper balance between those two testy old wranglers, that rarely pull the right way together, is as much the task for men in the grip of the world, as for the wanton youthful fry under dominion of their instincts; and probably, when it is done, man will have attained the golden age of his retirement from service.

Why be scheming? Victor asked. Unlike the gallant soldiery, his question was raised in the blush of a success, from an examination of the quality of the thing won; although it had not changed since it was first coveted; it was demonstrably the same: and an astonishing dry stick he held, as a reward for perpetual agitations and perversions of his natural tastes. Here was a Dudley Sowerby, the direct issue of the conception of Lakelands; if indeed they were not conceived together in one; and the young gentleman had moral character, good citizen substance, and station, rank, prospect of a title; and the grasp of him was firm. Yet so far was it from hearty, that when hearing a professed satirist like Colney Durance remark on the decorous manner of Dudley's transparent courtship of the girl, under his look of an awakened approval of himself, that he appeared to be asking everybody:—Do you not think I bid fair for an excellent father of Philistines?—Victor had a nip of spite at the thought of Dudley's dragging him bodily to be the grandfather. Poor Fredi, too!—necessarily the mother: condemned by her hard fate to feel proud of Philistine babies!

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Though women soon get reconciled to it! Or do they? They did once. What if his Fredi turned out one of the modern young women, who have drunk of ideas? He caught himself speculating on that, as on a danger. The alliance with Dudley really seemed to set him facing backward.

Colney might not have been under prompting of Nataly when he derided Dudley; but Victor was at war with the picture of her, in her compression of a cruel laugh, while her eyelids were hard shut, as if to exclude the young patriarch of Philistines' ridiculous image.

He hearkened to the Nature interrogating him, why had he stepped on a path to put division between himself and his beloved?—the smallest of gaps; and still the very smallest between nuptial lovers is a division —and that may become a mortal wound to their one life. Why had he roused a slumbering world? Glimpses of the world's nurse-like, old-fashioned, mother-nightcap benevolence to its kicking favourites; its long-suffering tolerance for the heroic breakers of its rough-cast laws, while the decent curtain continues dropped, or lifted only ankle-high; together with many scenes, lively suggestions, of the choice of ways he liked best, told of things, which were better things, incomprehensibly forfeited. So that the plain sense of value insisted on more than one weighing of the gain in hand: a dubious measure.

He was as little disposed to reject it as to stop his course at a goal of his aim. Nevertheless, a gain thus poorly estimated, could not command him to do a deed of humiliation on account of it. The speaking to this dry young Dudley was not imperative at present. A word would do in the day to come.

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Nataly was busy with her purchases of furniture, and the practice for the great August Concert. He dealt her liberal encouragements, up to the verge of Dr. Themison's latest hummed words touching Mrs. Burman, from which he jumped in alarm lest he should paralyze her again: the dear soul's dreaded aspect of an earthy pallor was a spectre behind her cheeks, ready to rush forth. Fenellan brought Carling to dine with him; and Themison was confirmed by Carling, with incidents in proof; Carling by Jarniman, also with incidents; one very odd one—or so it seemed, in the fury of the first savour of it:—she informed Jarniman, Skepsey said his friend Jarniman said, that she had dreamed of making her appearance to him on the night of the 23rd August, and of setting the date on the calendar over his desk, when she entered his room: 'Sitting-room, not bedroom; she was always quite the lady,' Skepsey reported his Jarniman. Mrs. Burman, as a ghost, would respect herself; she would keep to her character. Jarniman quite expected the dream to be verified; she was a woman of her word: he believed she had received a revelation of the approaching fact: he was preparing for the scene.

Victor had to keep silent and discourse of general prosperity. His happy vivaciousness assisted him to feel it by day. Nataly heard him at night, on a moan: 'Poor soul!' and loudly once while performing an abrupt demi-vault from back to side: 'Perhaps now!' in a voice through doors. She schooled herself to breathe equably.

Not being allowed to impart the distressing dose of comfort he was charged with, he swallowed it

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himself; and these were the consequences. And an uneasy sleep was traditionally a matter for grave debate in the Radnor family. The Duvidney ladies, Dorothea and Virginia, would have cited ancestral names, showing it to be the worst of intimations. At night, lying on his back beneath a weight of darkness, one heavily craped figure, distinguishable through the gloom, as a blot on a black pad, accused the answering darkness within him, until his mind was dragged to go through the whole case by morning light; and the compassionate man appealed to common sense, to stamp and pass his delectable sophistries; as, that it was his intense humaneness, which exposed him to an accusation of inhumanity; his prayer for the truly best to happen, which anticipated Mrs. Burman's expiry. They were simple sophistries, fabricated to suit his needs, readily taking and bearing the imprimatur of common sense. They refreshed him, as a chemical scent a crowded room.

All because he could not open his breast to Nataly, by reason of her feebleness; or feel enthusiasm in the possession of young Dudley! A dry stick indeed beside him on the walk Westward. Good quality wood, no doubt, but dry, varnished for conventional uses. Poor dear Fredi would have to crown it like the May-day posy of the urchins of Craye Farm and Creckholt!

Dudley wished the great City-merchant to appreciate him as a diligent student of commercial matters: rivalries of Banks; Foreign and Municipal Loans, American Rails, and Argentine; new Companies of wholesome appearance or sinister; or starting with

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a dram in the stomach, or born to bleat prostrate, like sheep on their backs in a ditch; Trusts and Founders; Breweries bursting vats upon the markets, and England prone along the gutters, gobbling, drunk for shares, and sober in the possession of certain of them. But when, as Colney says, a grateful England has conferred the Lordship on her Brewer, he gratefully hands-over the establishment to his country; and both may disregard the howls of a Salvation Army of shareholders.—Beaten by the Germans in Brewery, too! Dr. Schlesien has his right to crow. We were ahead of them, and they came and studied us, and they studied Chemistry as well; while we went on down our happy-go-lucky old road; and then had to hire their young Professors, and then to import their beer.

Have the Germans more brains than we English? Victor's blood up to the dome of his cranium knocked the patriotic negative. But, as old Colney says (and bother him, for constantly intruding!), the comfortably successful have the *habit of sitting*, and that dulls the brain yet more than it eases the person: hence are we outpaced; we have now to know we are racing. Victor scored a mark for one of his projects. A well-conducted Journal of the sharpest pens in the land might, at a sacrifice of money grandly sunk, expose to his English how and to what degree their sports, and their fierce feastings, and their opposition to ideas, and their timidity in regard to change, and their execration of criticism applied to themselves, and their unanimous adoption of it for a weapon against others, are signs of a prolonged indulgence in the cushioned seat. Victor saw it. But would the

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people he loved? He agreed with Colney, forgetting the satirist's venom: to-wit, that the journalists should be close under their editor's rod to put it in sound bold English;—no metaphors, no similes, nor flowery insubstantiality; but honest Saxon manger stuff: and put it repeatedly, in contempt of the disgust of iteration; hammering so a soft place on the Anglican skull, which is rubbed in consequence, and taught at last through soreness to reflect.—A Journal? —with Colney Durance for Editor?—and called comformably THE WHIPPING-TOP? Why not, if it exactly hits the signification of the Journal and that which it would have the country do to itself, to keep it going and truly topping? For there is no vulgarity in a title strongly signifying the intent. Victor wrote it at night, naming Colney for Editor, with a sum of his money to be devoted to the publication, in a form of memorandum; and threw it among the papers in his desk.

Young Dudley had a funny inquisitiveness about Dartrey Fenellan; owing to Fredi's reproduction or imitation of her mother's romantic sentiment for Dartrey, doubtless: a bit of jealousy, indicating that the dry fellow had his feelings. Victor touched-off an outline of Dartrey's history and character:—the half-brother of Simeon, considerably younger, and totally different. 'Dartrey's mother was Lady Charlotte Kiltorne, one of the Clanconans; better mother than wife, perhaps; and no reproach on her, not a shadow; only she made the General's Bank-notes fly black paper. And—if you 're for heredity—the queer point is, that Simeon, whose mother was a sober-minded woman, has always been the spendthrift. Dartrey

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married one of the Hennen women, all an odd lot, all handsome. I met her once. Colney said, she came up here with a special commission from the Prince of Darkness. There are women who stir the unholy in men—whether they mean it or not, you know.'

Dudley pursed to remark, that he could not say he did know. And good for Fredi if he did not know, and had his objections to the knowledge! But he was like the men who escape colds by wrapping in comforters instead of trusting to the spin of the blood.

'She played poor Dartrey pranks before he buried—he behaved well to her; and that says much for him; he has a devil of a temper. I've seen the blood in his veins mount to cracking. But there's the man: because she was a woman, he never let it break out with her. And, by heaven, he had cause. She couldn't be left. She tricked him, and she loved him—passionately, I believe. You don't understand women loving the husband they drag through the mire?'

Dudley did not. He sharpened his mouth.

'Buried, you said, sir?—a widower?'

'I've no positive information; we shall hear when he comes back,' Victor replied hurriedly. 'He got a drenching of all the damns in the British service from his Generalissimo one day at a Review, for a trooper's negligence—button or stock missing, or something; and off goes Dartrey to his hut, and breaks his sword, and sends in his resignation. Good soldier lost. And I can't complain; he has been a right-hand man to me over in Africa. But a man ought to have some control of his temper, especially a soldier.'

Dudley put emphasis into his acquiescence.

'Worse than that temper of Dartrey's, he can't

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forgive an injury. He bears a grudge against his country. You 've heard Colney Durance abuse old England. It 's three parts factitious—literary exercise. It 's milk beside the contempt of Dartrey's shrug. He thinks we 're a dead people, if a people; "subsisting on our fat," as Colney says.'

'I am not of opinion that we show it,' observed Dudley.

'We don't,' Victor agreed. He disrelished his companion's mincing tone of a monumental security, and yearned for Dartrey or Simeon or Colney to be at his elbow rather than this most commendable of orderly citizens, who little imagined the treacherous revolt from him in the bosom of the gentleman cordially signifying full agreement. But Dudley was not gifted to read behind words and looks.

They were in the Park of the dwindling press of carriages, and here was this young Dudley saying, quite commendably: 'It 's a pity we seem to have no means of keeping our parks select.'

Victor flung Simeon Fenellan at him in thought. He remembered a fable of Fenellan's, about a Society of the Blest, and the salt it was to them to discover an intruder from below, and the consequent accelerated measure in their hymning.

'Have you seen anything offensive to you?' he asked.

'One sees notorious persons.'

Dudley spoke aloof from them—'out of his cold attics,' Fenellan would have said.

Victor approved: with the deadened feeling common to us when first in sad earnest we consent to take life as it is. He perceived, too, the comicality of his

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having to resign himself to the fatherly embrace of goodness.

Lakelands had him fast, and this young Dudley was the kernel of Lakelands. If he had only been intellectually a little flexible in his morality! But no; he wore it cap à pie, like a mediæval knight his armour. One had to approve. And there was no getting away from him. He was good enough to stay in town for the practice of the opening overture of the amateurs, and the flute-duet, when his family were looking for him at Tunbridge Wells; and almost every day Victor was waylaid by him at a corner of the Strand.

Occasionally, Victor appeared at the point of interception armed with Colney Durance, for whom he had called in the Temple, bent on self-defence, although Colney was often as bitter to his taste as to Dudley's. Latterly the bitter had become a tonic. We rejoice in the presence of goodness, let us hope; and still an impersonation of conventional goodness perpetually about us depresses. Dudley drove him to Colney for relief. Besides it pleased Nataly that he should be bringing Colney home; it looked to her as if he were subjecting Dudley to critical inspection before he decided a certain question much, and foolishly, dreaded by the dear soul. That quieted her. And another thing, she liked him to be with Colney, for a clog on him; as it were, a tuning-fork for the wild airs he started. A little pessimism, also, she seemed to like; probably as an appeasement after hearing, and having to share, high flights. And she was, in her queer woman's way, always reassured by his endurance of Colney's company:—she read it to mean, that he could bear Colney's perusal of him, and satiric

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stings. Victor had seen these petty matters among the various which were made to serve his double and treble purposes; now, thanks to the operation of young Dudley within him, he felt them. Preferring Fenellan's easy humour to Colney's acid, he was nevertheless braced by the latter's antidote to Dudley, while reserving his entire opposition in the abstract.

For Victor Radnor and Colney Durance were the Optimist and Pessimist of their society. They might have headed those tribes in the country. At a period when the omnibus of the world appears to its quaint occupants to be going faster, men are shaken into the acceptation, if not performance, of one part or the other as it is dictated to them by their temperaments. Compose the parts, and you come nigh to the meaning of the Nineteenth Century: the mother of these gosling affirmatives and negatives divorced from harmony and awakened by the slight increase of incubating motion to vitality. Victor and Colney had been champion duellists for the rosy and the saturnine since the former cheerfully slaved for a small stipend in the City of his affection, and the latter entered on an inheritance counted in niggard hundreds, that withdrew a briefless barrister disposed for scholarship from the forlornest of seats in the Courts. They had foretold of one another each the unfulfilled; each claimed the actual as the child of his prediction. Victor was to have been ruined long back; Colney the prey of independent bachelors. Colney had escaped his harpy, and Victor could be called a millionaire and more. Prophecy was crowned by Colney's dyspepsia, by Victor's ticklish domestic position. Their pity for one another, their warm regard,

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was genuine; only, they were of different temperaments; and we have to distinguish, that in many estimable and some gifted human creatures, it is the quality of the blood which directs the current of opinion.

Victor played-off Colney upon Dudley, for his internal satisfaction, and to lull Nataly and make her laugh; but he could not, as she hoped he was doing, take Colney into his confidence; inasmuch as the Optimist, impelled by his exuberant anticipatory trustfulness, is an author, and does things; whereas the Pessimist is your chaired critic, with the delivery of a censor, generally an undoer of things. Our Optimy has his instinct to tell him of the cast of Pessimy's countenance at the confession of a dilemma—foreseen! He hands himself to Pessimy, as it were a sugar-cane, for the sour brute to suck the sugar and whack with the wood. But he cannot perform his task in return; he gets no compensation: Pessimy is invulnerable. You waste your time in hurling a common *tu-quoque* at one who hugs the worst.

The three walking in the park, with their bright view, and black view, and neutral view of life, were a comical trio. They had come upon the days of the unfanned electric furnace, proper to London's early August when it is not pipeing March. Victor complacently bore heat as well as cold: but young Dudley was a drought, and Colney a drug to refresh it; and why was he stewing in London? It was for this young Dudley, who resembled a London of the sparrowy roadways and wearisome pavements and blocks of fortress mansions, by chance a water-cart spirting a stale water: or a London of the farewell dinner-parties, where London's professed anecdotist

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lays the dust with his ten times told. Why was not Nataly relieved of her dreary round of the purchases of furniture! They ought all now to be in Switzerland or Tyrol. Nesta had of late been turning over leaves of an Illustrated book of Tyrol, dear to her after a run through the Innthal to the Dolomites one splendid August; and she and Nataly had read there of Hofer, Speckbacker, Haspinger; and wrath had filled them at the meanness of the Corsican, who posed after it as victim on St. Helena's rock; the scene in grey dawn on Mantua's fortress-walls blasting him in the Courts of History, when he strikes for his pathetic sublime.

Victor remembered how he had been rhetorical, as the mouthpiece of his darlings. But he had in memory prominently now the many glorious pictures of that mountain-land beckoning to him, waving him to fly forth from the London oven:—lo, the Tyrolese lime-stone crags with livid peaks and snow lining shelves and veins of the crevices; and folds of pinewood undulations closed by a shoulder of snow large on the blue; and a dazzling pinnacle rising over green pasture-Alps, the head of it shooting aloft as the blown billow, high off a broken ridge, and wide-armed in its pure white shroud beneath; tranced, but all motion in immobility, to the heart in the eye; a splendid image of striving, up to crowned victory. And see the long valley-sweeps of the hanging meadows and maize, and lower vineyards and central tall green spires! Walking beside young Dudley, conversing, observing too, Victor followed the trips and twists of a rill, that was lured a little further down through scoops, ducts, and scaffolded channels to serve a wainwright.

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He heard the mountain-song of the joyful water: a wren-robin-thrush on the dance down of a faun; till it was caught and muted, and the silver foot slid along the channel, swift as moonbeams through a cloud, with an air of '*Whither you will, so it be on*'; happy for service as in freedom. Then the yard of the inn below, and the rill-water twirling rounded through the trout-trough, subdued, still lively for its beloved onward: dues to business, dues to pleasure; a wedding of the two, and the wisest on earth:—eh? like some one we know, and Nataly has made the comparison. Fresh *forellen* for lunch: rhyming to Fenellan, he had said to her; and that recollection struck the day to blaze; for his friend was a ruined military captain living on a literary quill at the time; and Nataly's tender pleading, 'Could you not help to give him another chance, dear Victor?'—signifying her absolute trust in his ability to do that or more or anything, had actually set him thinking of the Insurance Office; which he started to prosperity, and Fenellan in it, previously an untutored rill of the mountains, if ever was one.

Useless to be dwelling on holiday pictures: Lakelands had hold of him!

Colney or somebody says, that the greater our successes, the greater the slaves we become.—But we must have an aim, my friend, and success must be the aim of any aim!—Yes, and, says Colney, you are to rejoice in the disappointing miss, which saves you from being damned by your bullet on the centre.—You're dead against Nature, old Colney.—That is to carry the flag of Liberty.—By clipping a limb!

Victor overcame the Pessimist in his own royal

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cranium-Court. He entertained a pronounced dissension with bachelors pretending to independence. It could not be argued publicly, and the more the pity: —for a slight encouragement, he would have done it; his outlook over the waves of bachelors and (by present conditions mostly constrained) spinsters— and another outlook, midnight upon Phlegethon to the thoughts of men, made him deem it urgent. And it helped the plea in his own excuse, as Colney pointed out to the son of Nature. That, he had to admit, was true. He charged it upon Mrs. Burman, for twisting the most unselfish and noblest of his thoughts; and he promised himself it was to cease on the instant when the circumstance, which Nature was remiss in not bringing about to-day or to-morrow, had come to pass. He could see his Nataly's pained endurance beneath her habitual submission. Her effort was a poor one, to conceal her dread of the day of the gathering at Lakelands.

On the Sunday previous to the day, Dr. Themison accompanied the amateurs by rail to Wrensham, to hear 'trial of the acoustics' of the Concert-hall. They were a goodly company; and there was fun in the railway-carriage over Colney's description of Fashionable London's vast octopus Malady-monster, who was letting the doctor fly to the tether of its longest filament for an hour, plying suckers on him the while. He had the look, to general perception, of a man but half-escaped: and as when the notes of things taken by the vision in front are being set down upon tablets in the head behind. Victor observed his look at Nataly. The look was like a door aswing, revealing in concealing. She was not or did not appear struck

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by it: perhaps, if observant, she took it for a busy professional gentleman's holiday reckoning of the hours before the return train to his harness, and his arrangements for catching it. She was, as she could be on a day of trial, her enchanting majestic self again —defying suspicions. She was his true mate for breasting a world honoured in uplifting her.

Her singing of a duet with Nesta, called forth Dr. Themison's very warm applause. He named the greatest of contraltos. Colney did better service than Fenellan at the luncheon-table: he diverted Nataly and captured Dr. Themison's ear with the narrative of his momentous expedition of European Emissaries, to plead the cause of their several languages at the Court of Japan: a Satiric Serial tale, that hit incidentally the follies of the countries of Europe, and intentionally, one had to think, those of Old England. Nesta set him going. Just when he was about to begin, she made her father laugh by crying out in a rapture, 'Oh! Delphica!' For she was naughtily aware of Dudley Sowerby's distaste for the story and disgust with the damsel Delphica.

Nesta gave Dr. Themison the preliminary sketch of the grand object of the expedition: indeed one of the eminent ones of the world; matter for an Epic; though it is to be feared, that our part in it will not encourage a Cis-Atlantic bard. To America the honours from beginning to end belong.

So, then, Japan has decided to renounce its language, for the adoption of the language it may choose among the foremost famous European tongues. Japan becomes the word for miraculous transformations of a whole people at the stroke of a wand; and let our

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English enrol it as the most precious of the powerful verbs. An envoy visits the principal Seats of Learning in Europe. He is of a gravity to match that of his unexampled and all but stupefying mission. A fluent linguist, yet an Englishman, the slight American accent contracted during a lengthened residence in the United States is no bar to the patriotism urging him to pay his visit of exposition and invitation from the Japanese Court to the distinguished Doctor of Divinity Dr. Bouthoin. The renown of Dr. Bouthoin among the learned of Japan has caused the special invitation to him; a scholar endowed by an ample knowledge and persuasive eloquence to cite and instance as well as illustrate the superior advantages to Japan and civilization in the filial embrace of mother English. 'For to this it must come predestinated,' says the astonishing applicant. 'We seem to see a fitness in it,' says the cogitative Rev. Doctor. 'And an Island England in those waters, will do wonders for Commerce,' adds the former. 'We think of things more pregnant,' concludes the latter, with a dry gleam of ecclesiastical knowingness. And let the editor of the Review upon his recent pamphlet, and let the prelate reprimanding him, and let the newspapers criticizing his pure Saxon, have a care!

Funds, universally the most convincing of credentials, are placed at Dr. Bouthoin's disposal: only it is requested, that for the present the expedition be secret. 'Better so,' says pure Saxon's champion. On a day patented for secrecy, and swearing-in the whole American Continent through the cables to keep the secret by declaring the patent, the Rev. Dr. Bouthoin, accompanied by his curate, the Rev.

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Mancate Semhians, stumbling across portmanteaux crammed with lexicons and dictionaries and other tubes of the voice of Hermes, takes possession of berths in the ship Polypheme, bound, as they mutually conceive, for the biggest adventure ever embarked on by a far-thoughted, high-thoughted, patriotic pair speaking pure Saxon or other.

Colney, with apologies to his hearers, avoided the custom of our period (called the Realistic) to create, when casual opportunity offers, a belief in the narrative by promoting nausea in the audience. He passed under veil the Rev. Doctor's acknowledgement of Neptune's power, and the temporary collapse of Mr. Semhians. Proceeding at once to the comments of these high-class missionaries on the really curious inquisitiveness of certain of the foreign passengers on board, he introduced to them the indisputably learned, the very argumentative, crashing, arrogant, pedantic, dogmatic, philological German gentleman, Dr. Gannius, reeking of the Teutonic Professor, as a library volume of its leather. With him is his fair-haired artless daughter Delphica. An interesting couple for the beguilement of a voyage: she so beautifully moderates his irascible incisiveness! Yet there is a strange tone that they have. What, then, of the polite, the anecdotic Gallic M. Falarique, who studiously engages the young lady in colloquy when Mr. Semhians is agitating outside them to say a word? What of that outpouring, explosive, equally voluble, uncontrolled M. Bobinikine, a Mongol Russian, shaped, featured, hued like the pot-boiled, round and tight young dumpling of our primitive boyhood, which smokes on the dish from the pot? And what of

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another, hitherto unnoticed, whose nose is of the hooked vulturine, whose name transpires as Pisistratus Mytharete? He hears Dr. Bouthoin declaim some lines of Homer, and beseeches him for the designation of that language. Greek, is it? Greek of the Asiatic ancient days of the beginning of the poetic chants? Dr. Gannius crashes cachinnation. Dr. Bouthoin caps himself with the offended Don. Mr. Semhians opens half an eye and a whole mouth. There must be a mystery, these two exclaim to one another in privacy. Delphica draws Mr. Semhians aside.

Blushing over his white necktie, like the coast of Labrador at the transient wink of its Jack-in-the-box Apollo, Mr. Semhians faintly tells of a conversation he has had with the ingenuous fair one; and she ardent as he for the throning of our incomparable Saxon English in the mouths of the races of mankind. Strange!—she partly suspects the Frenchman, the Russian, the attentive silent Greek, to be all of them bound for the Court of Japan. Concurrents? Can it be? We are absolutely to enter on a contention with rivals? Dr. Bouthoin speaks to Dr. Gannius. He is astonished, he says; he could not have imagined it!

'Have you ever imagined anything?' Dr. Gannius asks him. Entomologist, botanist, palæontologist, philologist, and at sound of horn a ready regimental corporal, Dr. Gannius wears good manners as a pair of bath-slippers, to rally and kick his old infant of an Englishman; who, in awe of his later renown and manifest might, makes it a point of discretion to be ultra-amiable; for he certainly is not in training,

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he has no alliances, and he must diplomatize; and the German is a strong one; a relative too; he is the Saxon's cousin, to say the least. This German has the habit of pushing past politeness to carry his argumentative war into the enemy's country: and he presents on all sides a solid rampart of recent great deeds done, and mailed readiness for the doing of more, if we think of assailing him in that way. We are really like the poor beasts which have cast their shells or cases, helpless flesh to his beak. So we are cousinly.

Whether more amused than amazed, we know not, Dr. Gannius hears from 'our simpleton of the pastures,' as he calls the Rev. Doctor to his daughter, that he and Mr. Semhians have absolutely pushed forth upon this most mighty of enterprises naked of any backing from their Government! Babes in the Wood that they are! *à la grace de dieu* at every turn that cries for astutia, they show no sign or symbol of English arms behind them, to support—and with the grandest of national prizes in view!—the pleading oration before the Court of the elect, erudites, we will call them, of an intelligent, yet half barbarous, people; hesitating, these, between eloquence and rival eloquence, cunning and rival cunning. Why, in such a case, the shadow-nimbus of Force is needed to decide the sinking of the scales. But have these English *never read their Shakespeare*, that they show so barren an acquaintance with human, to say nothing of semi-barbaric, nature? But it is here that we Germans prove our claim to being the sons of his mind.—Dr. Gannius, in contempt, throws off the mask: he also is a concurrent. And not only is he the chosen by election of the chief

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Universities of his land, he has behind him, as Athene dilating Achilles, the clenched fist of the Prince of thunder and lightning of his time. German, Japan shall be! he publicly swears before them all. M. Falarique damascenes his sharpest smile; M. Bobinikine double-dimples his puddingest; M. Mytharete rolls a forefinger over his beak; Dr. Bouthoin enlarges his eye on a sunny mote. And such is the masterful effect of a frank diplomacy, that when one party shows his hand, the others find the reverse of concealment in hiding their own.

Dr. Bouthoin and Mr. Semhians are compelled to suspect themselves to be encompassed with rivals, presumptively supported by their Governments. The worthy gentlemen had hoped to tumble into good fortune, as in the blessed old English manner. 'It has even been thus with us: unhelped we do it!' exclaims the Rev. Doctor. He is roused from dejection by hearing Mr. Semhians shyly (he has published verse) tell of the fair-tressed Delphica's phosphorial enthusiasm for our galaxy of British Poets. Assisted by Mr. Semhians, he begins to imagine, that he has, in the person of this artless devotee an ally, who will, through her worship of our Poets (by treachery to her sire—a small matter) sacrifice her guttural tongue, by enabling him (through the exercise of her arts, charms, intrigues—also a small matter) to obtain the first audience of the Japanese erudites.—Delphica, with each of the rivals in turn, is very pretty Comedy. She is aware that M. Falarique is her most redoubtable adversary, by the time that the vast fleet of steamboats (containing newspaper reporters) is beheld from the decks of the Polypheme puffing past Sandy Hook.

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There Colney left them, for the next instalment of the serial.

Nesta glanced at Dudley Sowerby. She liked him for his pained frown at the part his countrymen were made to play, but did wish that he would keep from expressing it in a countenance that suggested a worried knot; and mischievously she said: 'Do you take to Delphica?'

He replied, with an evident sincerity, 'I cannot say I do.'

Had Mr. Semhians been modelled on him?

'One bets on the German, of course—with Colney Durance,' Victor said to Dr. Themison, leading him over the grounds of Lakelands.

'In any case, the author teaches us to feel an interest in the rivals. I want to know what comes of it,' said the doctor.

'There's a good opportunity, one sees. But, mark me, it will all end in satire upon poor Old England. According to Colney, we excel in nothing.'

'I do not think there is a country that could offer the entertainment for which I am indebted to you to-day.'

'Ah, my friend, and you like their voices? The contralto?'

'Exquisite.'

Dr. Themison had not spoken the name of Radnor.

'Shall we see you at our next Concert-evening in town?' said Victor; and hearing 'the privilege' mentioned, his sharp bright gaze cleared to limpid. 'You have seen how it stands with us here!' At once he related what indeed Dr. Themison had begun speculatively to think might be the case.

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Mrs. Burman Radnor had dropped words touching a husband, and of her desire to communicate with him, in the event of her being given over to the surgeons: she had said, that her husband was a greatly gifted man; setting her head in a compassionate swing. This revelation of the husband soon after, was filling. And this Mr. Radnor's comrade's manner of it, was winning: a not too self-justifying tone; not void of feeling for the elder woman; with a manly eulogy of the younger, who had flung away the world for him and borne him their one dear child. Victor took the blame wholly upon himself. 'It is right that you should know,' he said to the doctor's thoughtful posture; and he stressed the blame; and a flame shot across his eyeballs. He brought home to his hearer the hurricane of a man he was in the passion: indicating the subjection of such a temperament as this Victor Radnor's to trials of the moral restraints beyond his human power.

Dr. Themison said: 'Would you—we postpone *that* as long as we can: but supposing the poor lady . . .?'

Victor broke in: 'I see her wish: I will.'

The clash of his answer rang beside Dr. Themison's faltering query.

We are grateful when spared the conclusion of a sentence born to stammer. If for that only, the doctor pressed Victor's hand warmly.

'I may, then, convey some form of assurance, that a request of the kind will be granted?' he said.

'She has but to call me to her,' said Victor, stiffening his back.

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The Great Assembly at Lakelands

Round the neighbourhood of Lakelands it was known that the day of the great gathering there had been authoritatively foretold as fine, by Mr. Victor Radnor; and he delivered his prophecy in the teeth of the South-western gale familiar to our yachting month; and he really inspired belief or a kind of trust; some supposing him to draw from reserves of observation, some choosing to confide in the singularly winged sparkle of his eyes. Lady Rodwell Blachington did; and young Mrs. Blathenoy; and Mrs. Fanning; they were enamoured of it. And when women stand for Hope, and any worshipped man for Promise, nothing less than redoubled confusion of him dissolves the union. Even then they cling to it, under an ejaculation, that it might and should have been otherwise; fancy partly has it otherwise, in her cærulean home above the weeping. So it is good at all points to prophesy with the aspect of the radiant day foretold.

A storm, bearing battle overhead, tore the night to pieces. Nataly's faith in the pleasant prognostic wavered beneath the crashes. She had not much power of heart to desire anything save that which her bosom disavowed. Uproar rather appeased her, calmness agitated. She wished her beloved to be spared from a disappointment, thinking he deserved all successes, because of the rigours inflicted by her present tonelessness of blood and being. Her unresponsive manner with him was not due to lack of

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fire in the blood or a loss of tenderness. The tender feeling, under privations unwillingly imposed, though willingly shared, now suffused her reflections, owing to a gratitude induced by a novel experience of him; known, as it may chance, and as it does not always chance, to both sexes in wedded intimacy here and there; known to women whose mates are proved quick to compliance with delicate intuitions of their moods of nature. A constant, almost visible, image of the dark thing she desired, and was bound not to desire, and was remorseful for desiring, oppressed her; a perpetual consequent warfare of her spirit and the nature subject to the thousand sensational hypocrisies invoked for concealment of its reviled brutish baseness, held the woman suspended from her emotions. She coldly felt that a caress would have melted her, would have been the temporary rapture. Coldly she had the knowledge that the considerate withholding of it helped her spirit to escape a stain. Less coldly, she thanked at heart her beloved, for being a gentleman in their yoke. It plighted them over flesh.

He talked to her on the pillow, just a few sentences; and, unlike himself, a word of City affairs: 'That fellow Blathenoy, with his increasing multitude of bills at the Bank: must watch him there, sit there regularly. One rather likes his wife. By the way, if you see him near me to-morrow, praise the Spanish climate; don't forget. He heads the subscription list of Lady Blachington's Charity.'

Victor chuckled at Colney's humping of shoulders and mouth, while the tempest seemed echoing a sulphurous pessimist. 'If old Colney had listened to

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me, when India gave proof of the metal and South Africa began heaving, he'd have been a fairly wealthy man by now . . . ha! it would have genialized him. A man may be a curmudgeon with money: the rule is for him to cuddle himself and take a side, instead of dashing at his countrymen all round and getting hated. Well, Colney popular, can't be imagined; but entertaining guests would have diluted his acid. He has the six hundred or so a-year he started old bachelor on; add his miserable pay for Essays. Literature! Of course, he sours. But don't let me hear of bachelors moralists. There he sits at his Temple Chambers hatching epigrams . . . pretends to have the office of critic! Honest old fellow, as far as his condition permits. I tell him it *will* be fine to-morrow.'

'You are generally right, dear,' Nataly said.

Her dropping breath was audible.

Victor smartly commended her to slumber, with heaven's blessing on her and a dose of soft nursery prattle.

He squeezed her hand. He kissed her lips by day. She heard him sigh settling himself into the breast of night for milk of sleep, like one of the world's good children. She could have turned to him, to show him she was in harmony with the holy night and loving world, but for the fear founded on a knowledge of the man he was; it held her frozen to the semblance of a tombstone lady beside her lord, in the aisle where horror kindles pitchy blackness with its legions at one movement. Verily it was the ghost of Mrs. Burman come to the bed, between them.

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Meanwhile the sun of Victor Radnor's popularity was already up over the extended circle likely to be drenched by a falsification of his daring augury, though the scud flew swift, and the beeches raved, and the oaks roared and snarled, and pine-trees fell their lengths. Fine to-morrow, to a certainty! he had been heard to say. The doubt weighed for something; the balance inclined with the gentleman who had become so popular: for he had done the trick so suddenly, like a stroke of the wizard; and was a real man, not one of your spangled zodiacs selling for sixpence and hopping to a lucky hit, laughed at nine times out of ten. The reasoning went—and it somewhat affected the mansion as well as the cottage, —that if he had become popular in this astonishing fashion, after making one of the biggest fortunes of modern times, he might, he must, have secret gifts. 'You can't foretell weather!' cried a pothouse sceptic. But the workmen at Lakelands declared that he had foretold it. Sceptics among the common folk were quaintly silenced by other tales of him, being a whiff from the delirium attending any mention of his name.

How had he become suddenly so popular as to rouse in the mind of Mr. Caddis, the sitting Member for the division of the county (said to have the seat in his pocket), a particular inquisitiveness to know the bearing of his politics? Mr. Radnor was rich, true; but these are days when wealthy men, ambitious of notoriety, do not always prove faithful to their class; some of them are cunning to bid for the suffrages of the irresponsible, recklessly enfranchised, corruptible masses. Mr. Caddis, if he had the seat in his pocket, had it from the support of a class trusting him to

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support its interests: he could count on the landowners, on the clergy, on the retired or retiring or comfortably cushioned merchants resident about Wrensham, on the many obsequious among electoral shopmen; annually he threw open his grounds, and he subscribed, patronized, did what was expected; and he was not popular; he was unpopular. Why? But why was the sun of this 23rd August, shining from its rise royally upon pacified, enrolled and liveried armies of cloud, more agreeable to earth's populations than his pinched appearance of the poor mopped red nose and melancholic rheumy eyelets on a January day! Undoubtedly Victor Radnor risked his repute of prophet. Yet his popularity would have survived the continuance of the storm and deluge. He did this:—and the mystery puzzling the suspicious was nothing wonderful:—in addition to a transparent benevolence, he spread a sort of assurance about him, that he thought the better of the people for their thinking well of themselves. It came first from the workmen at his house. 'The right sort, and no humbug: likes you to be men.' Such a report made tropical soil for any new seed.

Now, it is a postulate, to strengthen all poor commoners, that not even in comparison with the highest need we be small unless we yield to think it of ourselves. Do but stretch a hand to the touch of earth in you, and you spring upon combative manhood again, from the basis where all are equal. Humanity's historians, however, tell us, that the exhilaration bringing us consciousness of a stature, is gas which too frequently has to be administered. Certes the cocks among men do not require the process; they

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get it off the sight of the sun arising or a simple hen submissive: but we have our hibernating bears among men, our yoked oxen, cabhorses, beaten dogs; we have on large patches of these Islands, a Saxon population, much wanting assistance, if they are not to feel themselves beaten, driven, caught by the neck, yoked and heavy-headed. Blest, then, is he who gives them a sense of the pride of standing on legs. Beer, ordinarily their solitary helper beneath the iron canopy of wealth, is known to them as a bitter usurer; it knocks them flat in their persons and their fortunes, for the short spell of recreative exaltation. They send up their rough glory round the name of the gentleman—a stranger, but their friend: and never is friend to be thought of as a stranger—who manages to get the holiday for Wrensham and thereabout, that they may hurl away for one jolly day the old hat of a doddered humbleness, and trip to the strains of the internal music he has unwound.

Says he: Is it a Charity Concert? Charity begins at home, says he: and if I welcome you gentry on behalf of the poor of London, why, it follows you grant me the right to make a beginning with the poor of our parts down here. He puts it so, no master nor mistress neither could refuse him. Why, the workmen at his house were nigh pitching the contractors all sprawling on a strike, and Mr. Radnor takes train, harangues 'em and rubs 'em smooth; ten minutes by the clock, they say; and return train to his business in town; by reason of good sense and feeling, it was; poor men don't ask for more. A working man, all the world over, asks but justice and a little relaxation —just a collar of fat to his lean.

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Mr. Caddis, M.P., pursuing the riddle of popularity, which irritated and repelled as constantly as it attracted him, would have come nearer to an instructive presentment of it, by listening to these plain fellows, than he was in the line of equipages, at a later hour of the day. The remarks of the comfortably cushioned and wheeled, though they be eulogistic to extravagance, are vapourish when we court them for nourishment; substantially, they are bones to the cynical. He heard enumerations of Mr. Radnor's riches, eclipsing his own past compute. A merchant, a holder of mines, Director of a mighty Bank, projector of running Rails, a princely millionaire, and determined to be popular—what was the aim of the man? It is the curse of modern times, that we never can be sure of our Parliamentary seat; not when we have it in our pockets! The Romans have left us golden words with regard to the fickleness of the populace; we have our Horace, our Juvenal, we have our Johnson; and in this vaunted age of reason it is, that we surrender ourselves into the hands of the populace! Panem et circenses! Mr. Caddis repeated it, after his fathers; his fathers and he had not headed them out of that original voracity. There they were, for moneyed legislators to bewail their appetites. And it was an article of his legislation, to keep them there.

Pedestrian purchasers of tickets for the Charity Concert, rather openly, in an envelope of humour, confessed to the bait of the Radnor bread with bit of fun. Savoury rumours were sweeping across Wrensham. Mr. Radnor had borrowed footmen of the principal houses about. Cartloads of provisions had been seen to come. An immediate reward of a deed of benevolence, is a thing sensibly heavenly; and the five-

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shilling tickets were paid for as if for a packet on the counter. Unacquainted with Mr. Radnor, although the reports of him struck a summons to their gastric juices, resembling in its effect a clamorous cordiality, they were chilled, on their steps along the half-rolled new gravel-road to the house, by seeing three tables of prodigious length, where very evidently a feast had raged: one to plump the people—perhaps excessively courted by great gentlemen of late; shopkeepers, the villagers, children. These had been at it for two merry hours. They had risen. They were beef and pudding on legs; in some quarters, beer amiably manifest, owing to the flourishes of a military band. Boys, who had shaken room through their magical young corporations for fresh stowage, darted out of a chasing circle to the crumbled cornucopia regretfully forsaken fifteen minutes back, and buried another tart. Plenty still reigned: it was the will of the Master that it should.

We divert our attention, resigned in stoic humour, to the bill of the Concert music, handed us with our tickets at the park-gates: we have no right to expect refreshment; we came for the music, to be charitable. Signora Bianca Luciani: of whom we have read almost to the hearing her; enough to make the mistake at times. The grand violinist Durandarte: forcibly detained on his way to America. Mr. Radnor sent him a blank cheque:—no!—so Mr. Radnor besought him in person: he is irresistible; a great musician himself; it is becoming quite the modern style. We have now English noblemen who play the horn, the fife—the drum, some say! We may yet be Merrie England again, with our nobles taking the lead.

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England's nobles as a musical band at the head of a marching and dancing population, pictured happily an old Conservative country, that retained its members of aristocracy in the foremost places while subjecting them to downright uses. Their ancestors, beholding them there, would be satisfied on the point of honour; perhaps enlivened by hearing them at fife and drum.—

But middle-class pedestrians, having paid five shillings for a ticket to hear the music they love, and not having full assurance of refreshment, are often, latterly, satirical upon their superiors; and, over this country at least, require the refreshment, that the democratic sprouts in them may be reconciled with aristocracy. Do not listen to them further on the subject. They vote safely enough when the day comes, if there is no præternaturally strong pull the other way.

They perceive the name of the Hon. Dudley Sowerby, fourth down the Concert-bill; marked for a flute-duet with Mr. Victor Radnor, Miss Nesta Victoria Radnor accompanying at the piano. It may mean . . .? do you want a whisper to suggest to you what it may mean? The father's wealth is enormous; the mother is a beautiful majestic woman in her prime. And see, she sings: a wonderful voice. And lower down, a duet with her daughter: violins and clarionet; how funny; something Hungarian. And in the Second Part, Schubert's *Ave Maria*—Oh! when we hear that, we dissolve. She was a singer before he married her, they say: a lady by birth: one of the first County families. But it was a gift, and she could not be kept from it, and was going, when they met—and it was

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love! the most perfect duet. For him she abandoned the Stage. You must remember, that in their young days the Stage was many stages beneath the esteem entertained for it now. Domestic Concerts are got up to gratify her; a Miss Fredericks: good old English name. Mr. Radnor calls his daughter, Freddy; so Mr. Taplow, the architect says. They are for modern music and ancient. *Tannhäuser*, Wagner, you see. Pergolese. Flute-duet, Mercadante. Here we have him!—Durandarte: *Air Basque*, variations—his own. Again, Señor Durandarte, Mendelssohn. Encore him, and he plays you a national piece. A dark little creature a Life-Guardsman could hold up on his outstretched hand for the fifteen minutes of the performance; but he fills the hall and thrills the heart, wafts you to heaven; and does it as though he were conversing with his Andalusian lady-love in easy whispers about their mutual passion for Spanish chocolate all the while: so the musical critic of the *Tirra-Lirra* says. Express trains every half hour from London; all the big people of the city. Mr. Radnor commands them, like Royalty. Totally different from that old figure of the wealthy City merchant; young, vigorous, elegant, a man of taste, highest culture, speaks the languages of Europe, patron of the Arts, a perfect gentleman. His mother was one of the Montgomerys, Mr. Taplow says. And it was General Radnor, a most distinguished officer, dying knighted. But Mr. Victor Radnor would not take less than a Barony—and then only with descent of title to his daughter, in her own right.

Mr. Taplow had said as much as Victor Radnor chose that he should say.

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Carriages were in flow for an hour: pedestrians formed a wavy coil. Judgeing by numbers, the entertainment was a success; would the hall contain them? Marvels were told of the hall. Every ticket entered and was enfolded; almost all had a seat. Chivalry stood. It is a breeched abstraction, sacrificeing voluntarily and genially to the Fair, for a restoring of the balance between the sexes, that the division of good things be rather in the fair ones' favour, as they are to think: with the warning to them, that the establishment of their claim for equality puts an end to the priceless privileges of petticoats. Women must be mad, to provoke such a warning; and the majority of them submissively show their good sense. They send up an incense of perfumery, all the bouquets of the chemist commingled; most nourishing to the idea of woman in the nose of man. They are a forest foliage-rustle of silks and muslins, magic interweaving, or the mythology, if you prefer it. See, hear, smell, they are Juno, Venus, Hebe, to you. We must have poetry with them; otherwise they are better in the kitchen. Is there—but there is not; there is not present one of the chivalrous breeched who could prefer the shocking emancipated gristly female, which imposes propriety on our sensations and inner dreams, by petrifying in the tender bud of them.

Colonel Corfe is the man to hear on such a theme. He is a colonel of Companies. But those are his diversion, as the British Army has been to the warrior. *Puellis idoneus*, he is professedly a lady's man, a rose-beetle, and a fine specimen of a common kind: and he has been that thing, that shining delight

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of the lap of ladies, for a spell of years, necessitating a certain sparkle of the saccharine crystals preserving him, to conceal the muster. He has to be fascinating, or he would look outworn, forlorn. On one side of him is Lady Carmine; on the other, Lady Swanage; dames embedded in the blooming maturity of England's conservatory. Their lords (an Earl, a Baron) are of the lords who go down to the City to sow a title for a repair of their poor incomes, and are to be commended for frankly accepting the new dispensation while they retain the many advantages of the uncancelled ancient. Thus gently does a maternal Old England let them down. Projectors of Companies, Directors, Founders; Railway magnates, actual kings and nobles (though one cannot yet persuade old reverence to do homage with the ancestral spontaneity to the uncrowned, uncoroneted, people of our sphere); holders of Shares in gold mines, Shares in Afric's blue mud of the glittering teeth we draw for English beauty to wear in the ear, on the neck, at the wrist; Bankers and wives of Bankers. Victor passed among them, chatting right and left.

Lady Carmine asked him: 'Is Durandarte counted on?'

He answered: 'I made sure of the Luciani.'

She serenely understood. Artistes are licenced people, with a Bohemian instead of the titular glitter for the bewildering of moralists; as paste will pass for diamonds where the mirror is held up to Nature by bold supernumeraries.

He wished to introduce Nesta. His girl was on the raised orchestral flooring. Nataly held her fast to a music-scroll.

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Mr. Peridon, sad for the absence and cause of absence of Louise de Seilles, — summoned in the morning abruptly to Bourges, where her brother lay with his life endangered by an accident at Artillery practice, — Mr. Peridon was generally conductor. Victor was to lead the full force of amateurs in the brisk overture to *Zampa*. He perceived a movement of Nataly, Nesta, and Peridon. 'They have come,' he said; he jumped on the orchestra boards and hastened to greet the Luciani with Durandarte in the retiring-room.

His departure raised the whisper that he would wield the bâton. An opinion was unuttered. His name for the flute-duet with the Hon. Dudley Sowerby had not provoked the reserve opinion; it seemed, on the whole, a pretty thing in him to condescend to do: the sentiment he awakened was not flustered by it. But the act of leading, appeared as an official thing to do. Our soufflé of sentiment will be seen subsiding under a breath, without a repressive word to send it down. Sir Rodwell Blachington would have preferred Radnor's not leading or playing either. Colonel Corfe and Mr. Caddis declined to consider such conduct English, in a man of station . . . notwithstanding Royal Highnesses, who are at least partly English: *partly*, we say, under our breath, remembering our old ideal of an English gentleman, in opposition to German tastes. It is true, that the whole country is changeing, decomposing!

The colonel fished for Lady Carmine's view.—And Lady Swanage too? Both of the distinguished ladies approved of Mr. Radnor's leading—for a leading off. Women are pleased to see their favourite in the place

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of prominence—as long as Fortune swims him unbuffeted, or one should say, unbattered, up the mounting wave. Besides these ladies had none of the colonel's remainder of juvenile English sense of the manly, his adolescent's intolerance of the eccentric, suspicion and contempt of any supposed affectation, which was not ostentatiously, stalkingly practised to subdue the sex. And you cannot wield a bâton without looking affected. And at one of the Colonel's Clubs in town, only five years back, an English musical composer, who had not then made his money —now by the mystery of events *knighted!*—had been (he makes now fifteen thousand a year) black-balled. 'Fiddler? no; can't admit a Fiddler to associate on equal terms with gentlemen.' Only five years back: and at present we are having the Fiddler everywhere.

A sprinkling of the minor ladies also would have been glad if Mr. Radnor had kept himself somewhat more exclusive. Dr. Schlesien heard remarks, upon which his weighty Teutonic mind sat crushingly. Do these English care one bit for music?—for anything finer than material stuffs?—what that man Durance calls, '*their beef, their beer, and their pew in eternity*'? His wrath at their babble and petty brabble doubted that they did.

But they do. Art has a hold of them. They pay for it; and the thing purchased grapples. It will get to their bosoms to breathe from them in time: entirely overcoming the taste for feudalism, which still a little objects to see their born gentlemen acting as leader of musicians. A people of slow movement, developing tardily, their country is wanting in the

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distincter features, from being always in the transitional state, like certain sea-fish rolling head over—you know not head from tail. Without the Welsh, Irish, Scot, in their composition, there would not be much of the yeasty ferment: but it should not be forgotten that Welsh, Irish, Scot, are now largely of their numbers; and the taste for elegance, and for spiritual utterance, for Song, nay, for Ideas, is there among them, though it does not everywhere cover a rocky surface to bewitch the eyes of aliens;—like Louise de Seilles and Dr. Schlesien, for example; aliens having no hostile disposition toward the people they were compelled to criticize; honourably granting, that this people has a great history. Even such has the Lion, with Homer for the transcriber of his deeds. But the gentle aliens would image our emergence from wildness as the unsocial spectacle presented by the drear menagerie Lion, alone or mated; with hardly an animated moment save when the raw red joint is beneath his paw, reminding him of the desert's pasture.

Nevertheless, where Strength is, there is hope:—it may be said more truly than of the breath of Life; which is perhaps but the bucket of breath, muddy with the sediment of the well: whereas we have in Strength a hero, if a malefactor; whose muscles shall haul him up to the light he will prove worthy of, when that divinity has shown him his uncleanness. And when Strength is not exercising, you are sure to see Satirists jump on his back. Dozens, foreign and domestic, are on the back of Old England; a tribute to our quality if at the same time an irritating scourge. The domestic are in excess; and let

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us own that their view of the potentate, as an apathetic beast of power, who will neither show the power nor woo the graces; pretending all the while to be eminently above the beast, and posturing in an inefficient mimicry of the civilized, excites to satire. Colney Durance had his excuses. He could point to the chief creative minds of the country for generations, as beginning their survey genially, ending venomously, because of an exasperating unreason and scum in the bubble of the scenes, called social, around them. Viola under his chin, he gazed along the crowded hall, which was to him a rich national pudding of the sycophants, the hypocrites, the burlies, the idiots; dregs of the depths and froth of the surface; bowing to one, that they may scorn another; instituting a Charity, for their poorer fawning fellows to relieve their purses and assist them in tricking the world and their Maker:—and so forth, a tiresome tirade: and as it was not on his lips, but in the stomach of the painful creature, let him grind that hurdy-gurdy for himself. His friend Victor set it stirring: Victor had here what he aimed at! How Success derides Ambition! And for this he imperilled the happiness of the worthy woman he loved! Exposed her to our fen-fogs and foul snakes—of whom one or more might be in the assembly now: all because of his insane itch to be the bobbing cork on the wave of the minute! Colney's rapid interjections condensed upon the habitual shrug at human folly, just when Victor, fronting the glassy stare of Colonel Corfe, tapped to start his orchestra through the lively first bars of the overture to *Zampa*.

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We soon perceive that the post Mr. Radnor fills he thoroughly fills, whatever it may be. *Zampa* takes horse from the opening. We have no amateur conductor riding ahead: violins, 'cellos, piano, wind-stops: Peridon, Catkin, Pempton, Yatt, Cormyn, Colney, Mrs. Cormyn, Dudley Sowerby; they are spirited on, patted, subdued, muted, raised, rushed anew, away, held in hand, in both hands. Not earnestness worn as a cloak, but issuing, we see; not simply a leader of musicians, a leader of men. The halo of the millionaire behind, assures us of a development in the character of England's merchant princes. The homage we pay him flatters us. A delightful overture, masterfully executed; ended too soon; except that the programme forbids the ordinary interpretation of prolonged applause. Mr. Radnor is one of those who do everything consummately. And we have a monition within, that a course of spiritual enjoyment will rouse the call for bodily refreshment. His genial nod and laugh and word of commendation to his troop persuade us oddly, we know not how, of provision to come. At the door of the retiring-room, see, he is congratulated by Luciani and Durandarte. Miss Priscilla Graves is now to sing a *Schumann*. Down later, it is a duet with the Rev. Septimus Barmby. We have nothing to be ashamed of in her, before an Italian Operatic singer! Ices after the first part is over.

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